REAL WEST YEARBOOK

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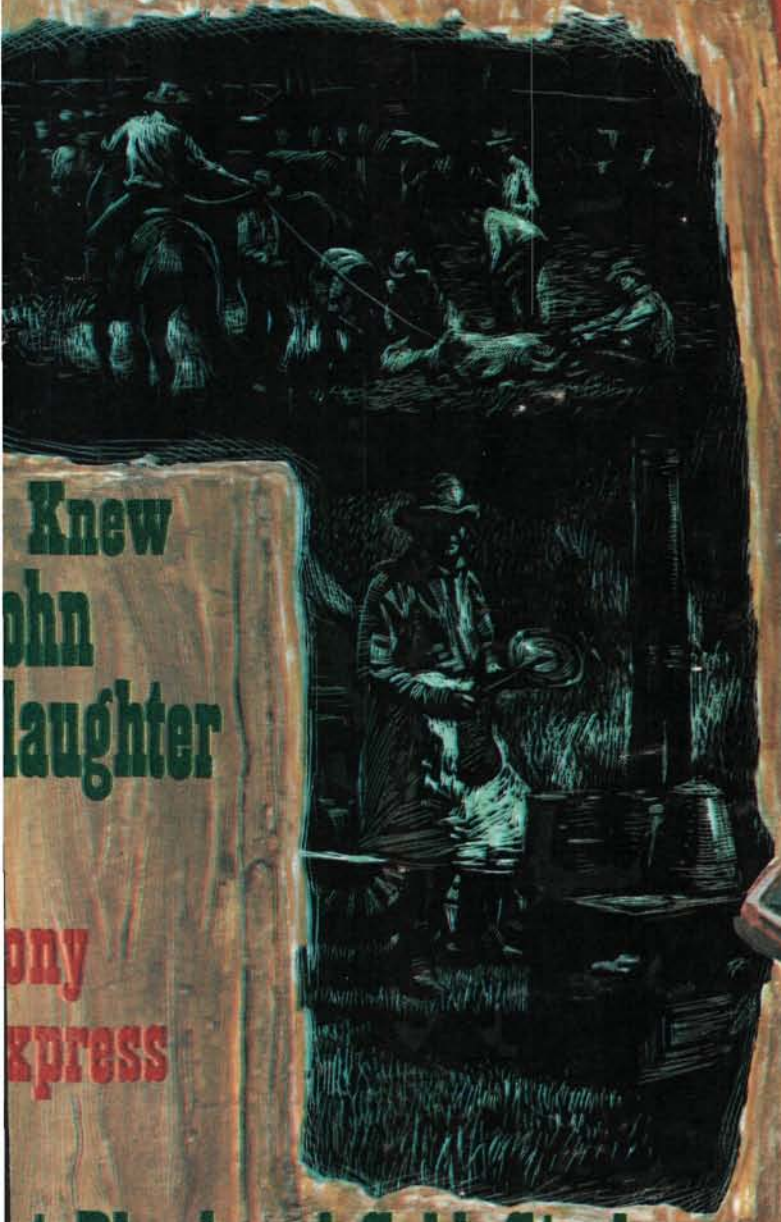
50 Years Following Heel Dust



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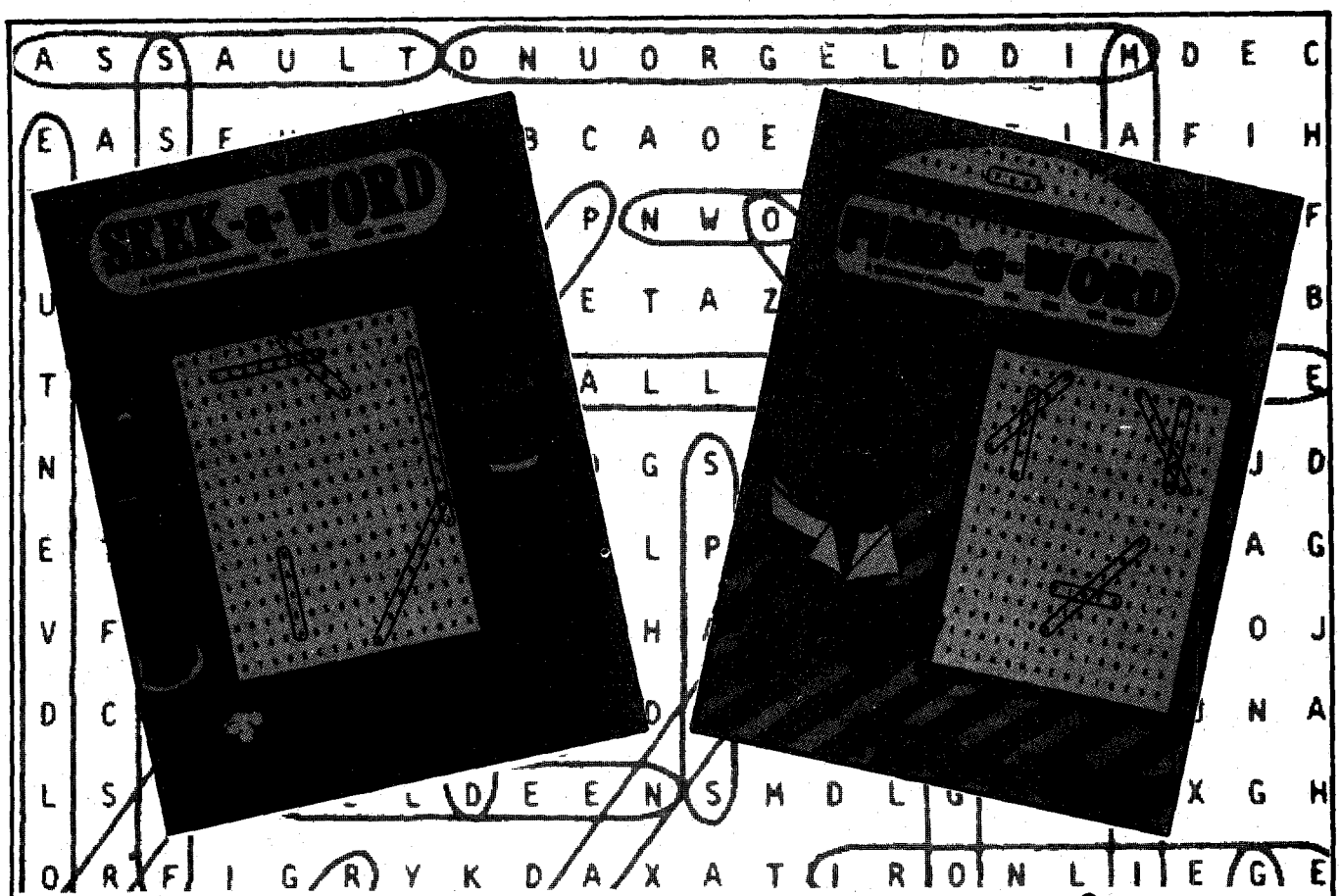

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Spring 1974

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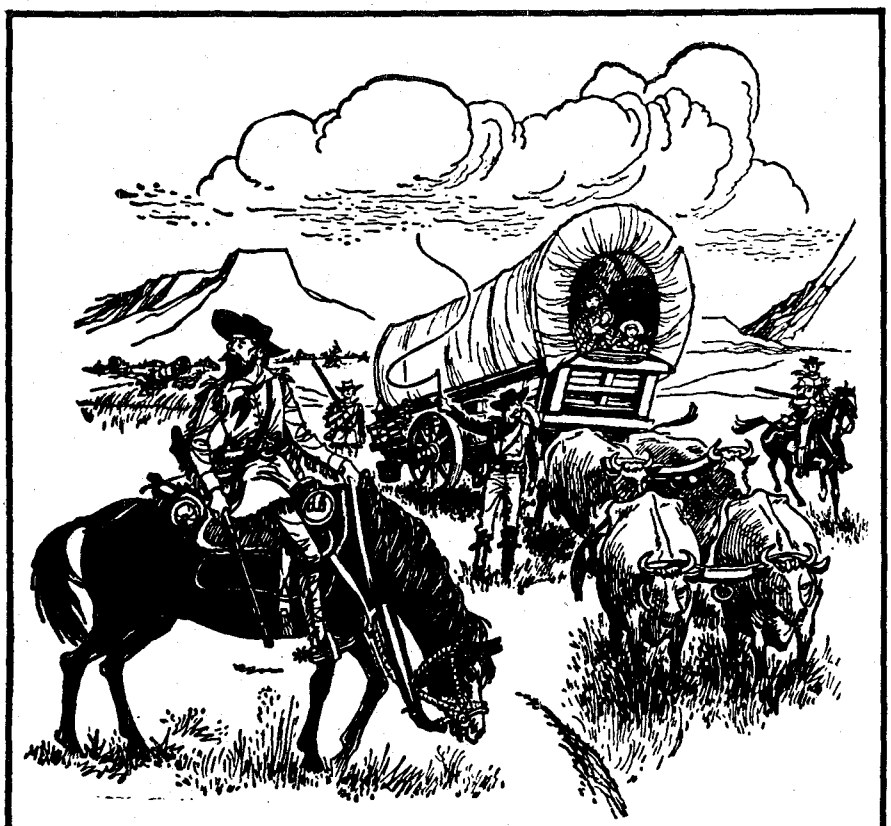

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INTRODUCTION

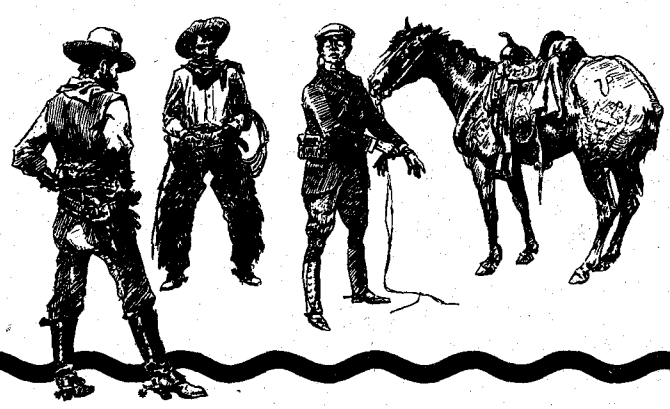
Come in and meet some old friends; no matter that they've been dead for years and their bones are dust in some part of the West. We've conferred upon them the appellation "old friends" based on your response when their stories were first published. Perhaps you wouldn't want to actually fraternize with them nowadays, invite them into your homes to meet the wife and kiddies — the buffalo hunter had rather loose ideas about hygiene, and could you trust Jack McCall? Wild Bill Hickok should never have turned his back on him. I'm sure you would like to chat with the early Western artist, obviously a man of culture. Well, you don't have to invite them into your homes.

Dip into these pages and you'll be right there with them — with the early citizens of roaring towns, a variegated and motley bunch. You'll meet the professional gambler, well-dressed, soft-handed, icily calm, as he surveys through half-lidded eyes the cards and the prospects. Up at the bar, drinking too much as usual and becoming more touchy with every drink, you'll see the tinhorn gunsel, longing for a reputation. The ladies of joy are there, looking for a soft touch, but be careful!

They'll roll you without a bat of an eye! You'll also meet some earlier types, like Jim Bowie with his murderous looking knife. Jim has a pretty good reputation, made solid forever by his performance at the Alamo, but I don't know how Jim would fit in nowadays — he was quick to take offense and his knife was ever ready. It would make for a messy living room if your brother-in-law offended him.

And with a little help from your imagination, aided by our writers, you'll walk the dusty, rutted streets and see these people, long dead: the drovers, the peaceful settlers, the farmers trying to carve out a homestead, the Indians puzzled at the mad ways of the white eyes. Sitting over there by himself you'll see the mountain man, in town for a short while and longing to get back to his beloved uncrowded wilderness. Look at them all! In that crowd are solid citizens, men who will see to it that settlements become towns and towns become cities.

Also, frighteningly numerous are murderers, cattle rustlers, gunfighters and assorted psychotics. They're all here, and at your request. We've brought them back, along with the dusty roads, the din of milling cattle, the acrid smell of gunsmoke, the fiery burn of cheap whiskey, and the raucous cacophony of the Western saloon. Come in, and stay a while!



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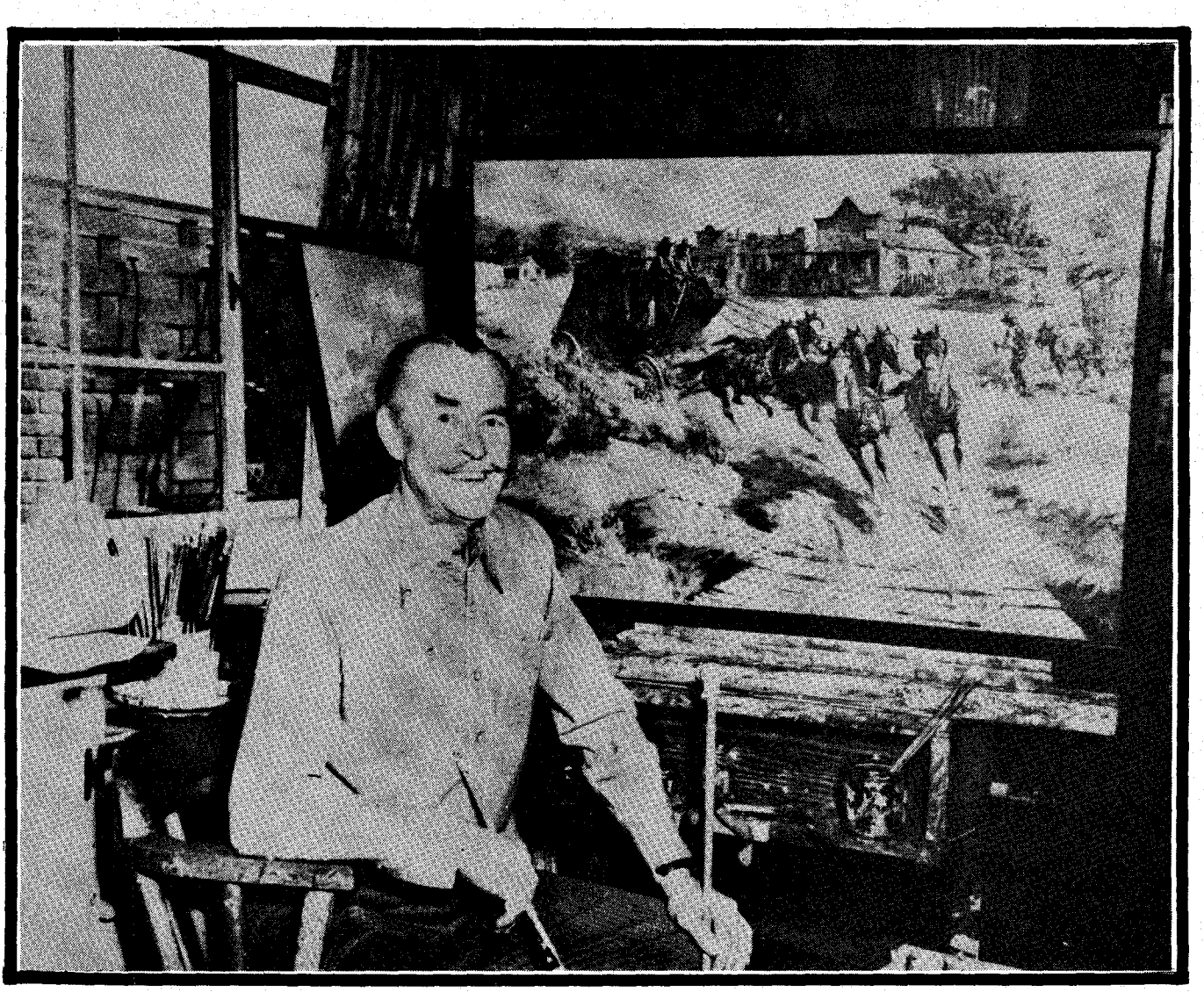
FRED HARMAN
Western Cowboy Artist

By Mario A. DeMarco

Most Americans are familiar with the work of this great American artist. He originated the comic strip "Red Ryder" which appeared in more than 750 newspapers daily and inspired more than 30 movies. When Fred Harman discontinued the strip he turned to serious painting and now his paintings are bought as fast as he can do them.



All pictures courtesy Fred Harman

Fred Harman in his studio.

In my living room wall there hangs two very beautiful and vivid prints of cowboy scenes. The larger print shows a red haired, lanky cowboy on a dark horse riding from his ranch onto the open range, and alongside is a small Indian lad on a small pinto pony. A closer inspection of these two reveals that they are the famous cartoon strip characters "Red Ryder and Little Beaver." On the smaller print shows a riderless horse waiting for his rider who is occupied in an old rickety, wooden "out house". I have received more favorable comments from these two prints than any other art in the house. They were sent to me by the famous western painter, Fred Har-

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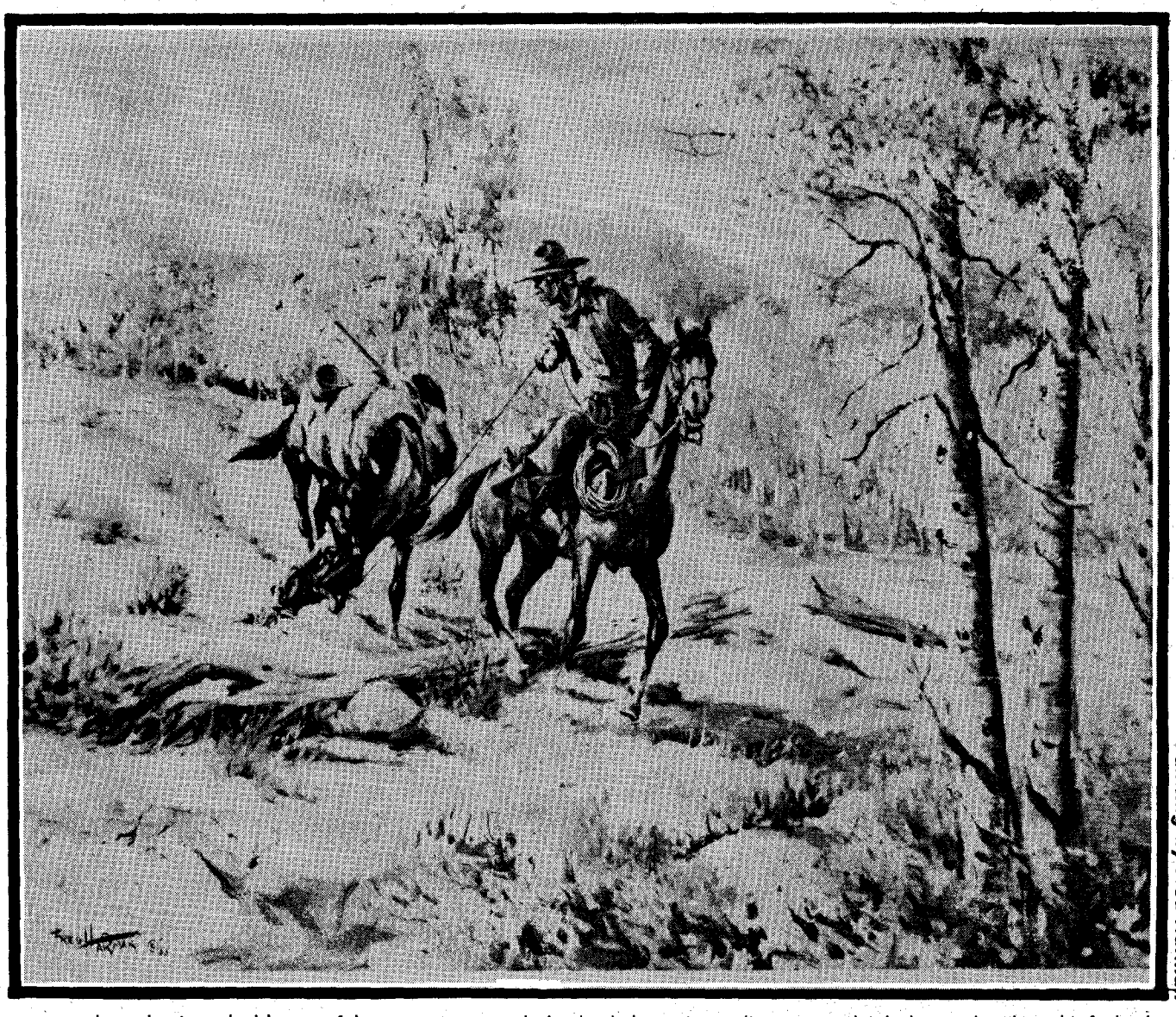

All Pictures Courtesy Fred Harman

Painting by Fred Harman

man, who today is probably one of the busiest and best painters in the West.

Many of you probably recognize the name of Fred Harman. He was the originator of the widely distributed famous comic strip "Red Ryder" and his little sidekick, "Little Beaver." Before Fred decided to abandon his strip, it was appearing in more than 750 newspapers and had become so popular throughout the years that more than 30 movies were made about this red haired cowboy.

It also was heard daily over the radio, and at one time or another numerous toys and games bearing the comic strip characters were produced and sold. Whatever happened to "Red Ryder" you may ask yourself. Well, let's start at the beginning.

Fred was born about 70 years ago in Colorado. His dad was a struggling lawyer who with his two brothers had staked homestead claims in the beautiful San Juan Country of Colorado. Even before this, the Harman line goes back to the Civil War period where they had roots in the same country. Fred's mom was very pretty, and she had the unique distinction of once having been painted by the world renowned artist, Charles Dana Gibson. The Harman ranch was built near the hunting grounds of the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches, and young Fred came in contact with many of these Indians who passed by the ranch.

As a youngster, he disliked school but had a love for drawing and in this beautiful spacious country had many subjects to choose from. His happiest recollections were when the family became snow bound for periods at a time each winter, and Fred occupied his time drawing. At first, it was for fun, later his parents recognized his great talent to draw from memory, so they encouraged him further.

In 1916 the Harman family moved to Kansas City, Missouri, and Fred, a tall strong boy, took odd jobs to help the family income. It was nothing for the lad to quickly harness a team of horses and even less of a chore to put shoes on them.

Fred considered this type of work pretty easy compared to some of the tough jobs he used to do on his father's ranch. About this time World War I was going full blast, and Fred, craving for action, quit school in spite of his parents' pleading and enlisted in the Army. At the time of his enlistment the War was at an end, and Fred's military venture landed him in the National Guards. Shortly after, he was discharged and he quickly returned to Colorado and his parents' ranch.

Several years later, he got the "traveling itch" and returned to Kansas City where he landed a job as a printer's helper on the Kansas City Star. This move prompted Fred to go into art further, because between job assignments he would visit the art room and watch the artists at work. While watching them he could visualize himself producing drawings about his beloved west.

Fred couldn't stand being away from home too long because he always managed to head back to Colorado and take up his duties as cowboy and ranch hand. It was while performing his job as a cowboy that

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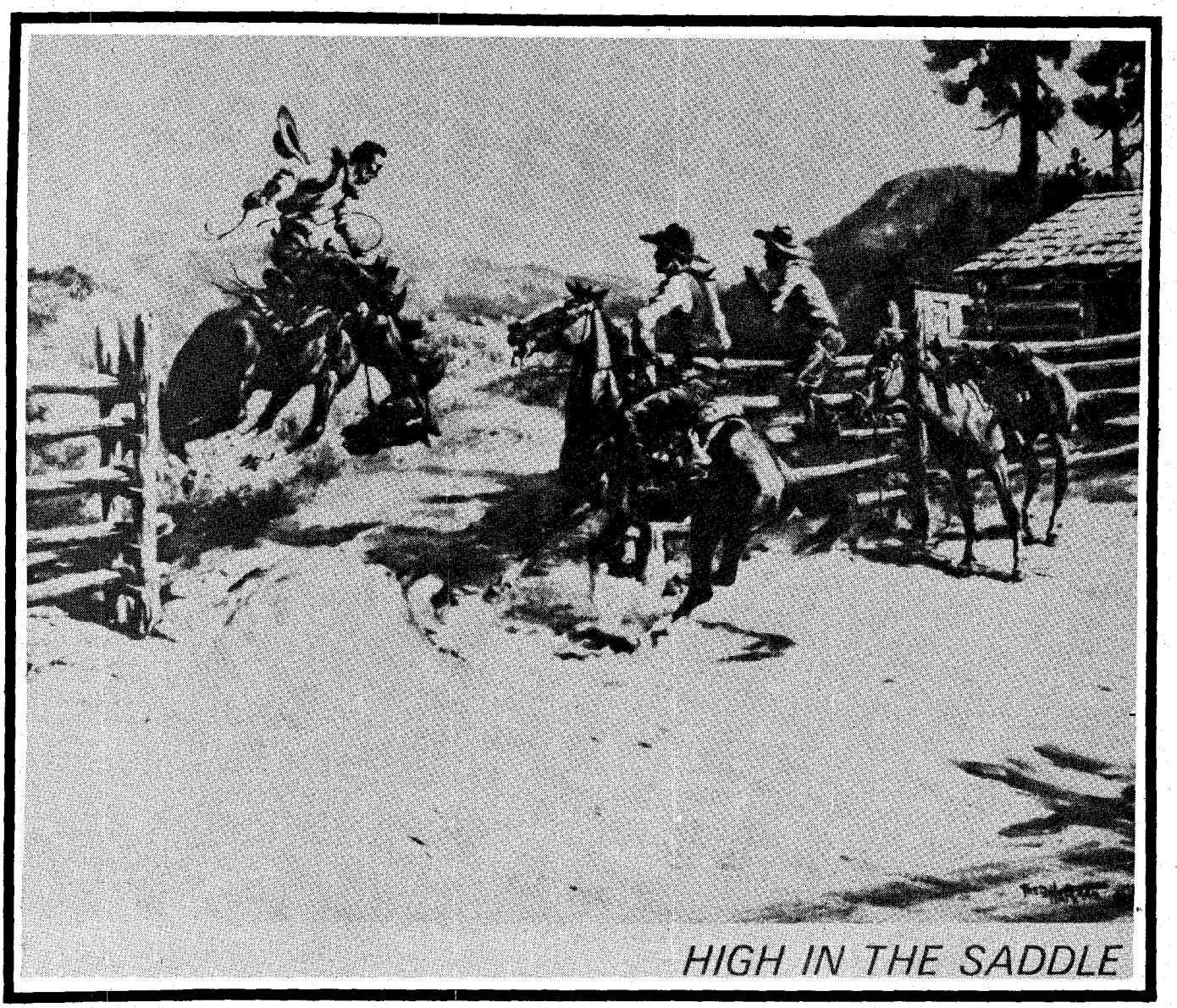

Painting by Fred Harman

these pleasant impressions were stored in the back of his young mind and later released and used as subjects in his colorful paintings. His first professional job was with a film company in Kansas. He worked with two other men as a team. One of these men was the late Walt Disney.

This job didn't last too long because of an air venture that Fred and Walt attempted which later proved disastrous. Walt headed for California for better things and Fred ended up working for a catalogue company in St. Joseph, Missouri.

It was here that he learned quite a bit in the art field, and another important factor in his life was that he met an attractive young music teacher, Miss Lola Andrews, who was also working for the company. It took several weeks of effort to ask the young miss to go out with him to a movie, which she did, and as fate had willed it, Fred and Lola were later married.

It was after they married that Fred took stock of himself and decided the time had come for serious painting in order for both to live. So with his job as artist for the catalogue company and his paintings they survived.

On May 27, 1927, a handsome boy was born to the joyous Harmans. It was quite a memorable occasion because Charles Lindbergh had just crossed the Atlantic and had landed in Paris that same day. To Fred, the birth of his son was the greatest achievement. Living in a crowded city was quite difficult for Fred, and the few years that he had spent in Missouri were restless and difficult.

The Harmans tried different ventures in several other states, but nothing proved worthwhile. The west was in Fred's blood, and all he talked about to his young wife was ranch life, Indians and cowboys, until one day she figured her husband would never be happy away from his beloved surroundings, so she encouraged him to move back home. It didn't take much convincing on Fred's part.

He was packed and the family was headed toward Pagosa Springs, Colorado in no time flat. Fred didn't waste any time. He built a small log cabin with a barn and corrals. At this time he was working on several different projects of art for syndication.

While on a business trip to California he got an idea for a cartoon strip entitled "The Bronc Peeler and Red Ryder". At first he had little luck with it and sold just enough of the work to keep going. This was back in 1934.

While in Hollywood he met several men who later influenced him greatly by their own work. One was Will James, the cowboy artist and writer, with whom Fred became fast friends and spent much of his time swapping stories when both worked on the range. The other was Charles Russell, nephew of the painter who encouraged Fred to paint in the same manner as his uncle. Fred spent countless hours studying the Russell painting technique and beautiful color arrangements.

In 1935 Fred got his big break. A friend recommended that Stephen Slesinger represent him in publishing. He began illustrating books and after awhile had more than he could han-

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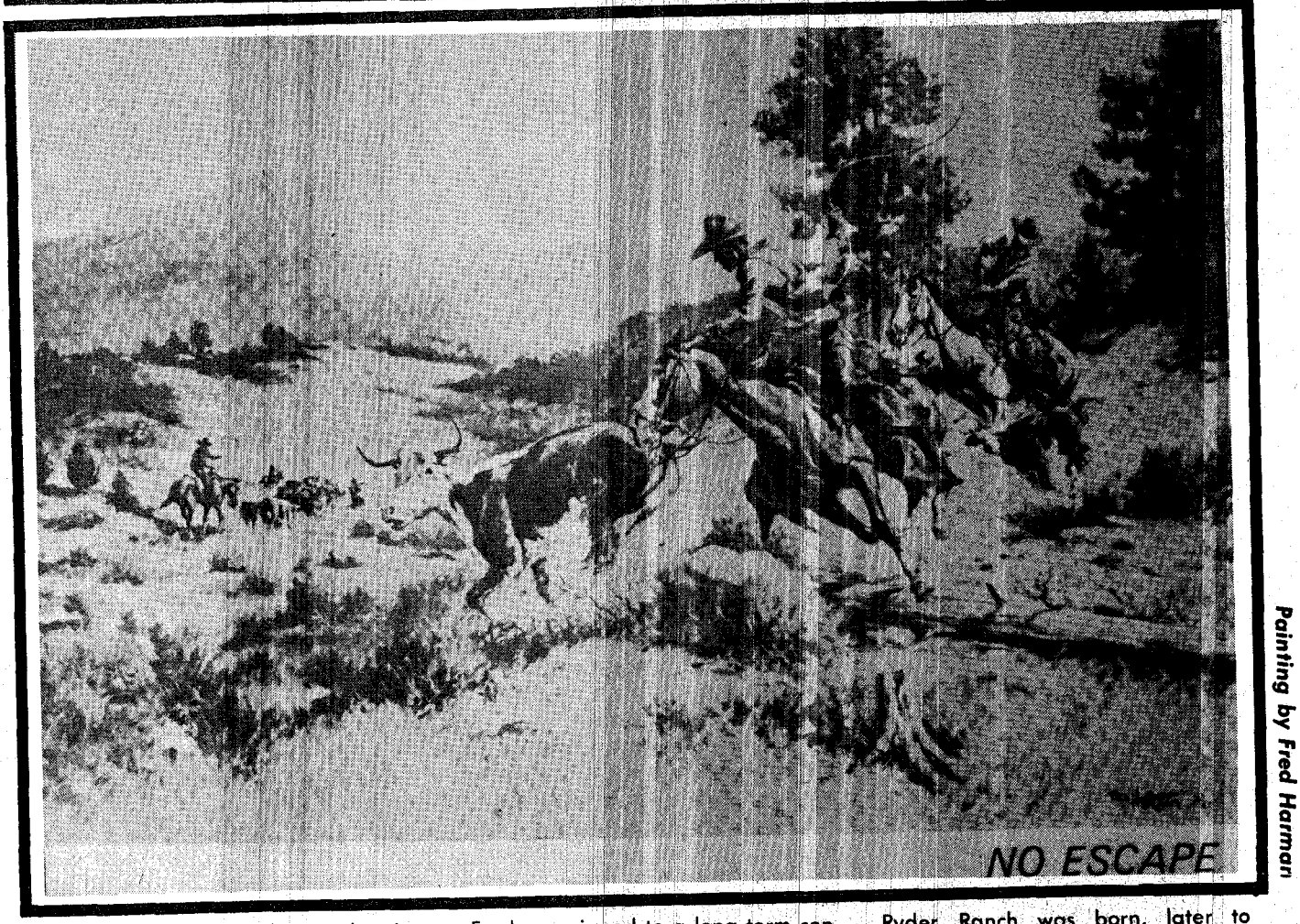
Painting by Fred Harman



Painting by Fred Harman

dle. Fred once again began drawing samples of his comic strip, "The Bronc Peeler and Red Ryder".

The president of the Scripps Howard chain liked what he saw and shortened the title to "Red Ryder". Fred was signed to a long term contract and the rest is history.

The Harman family moved back to Pagosa Springs in 1940. Fred, with plenty of capital, built the ranch of his dreams and in a short time the Red Ryder Ranch was born, later to become the most famous spread in the southwest. During World War II and the Korean conflict Fred traveled over

(continued on page 14)

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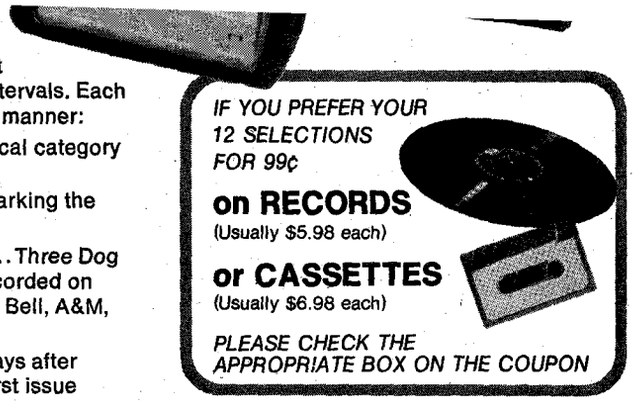

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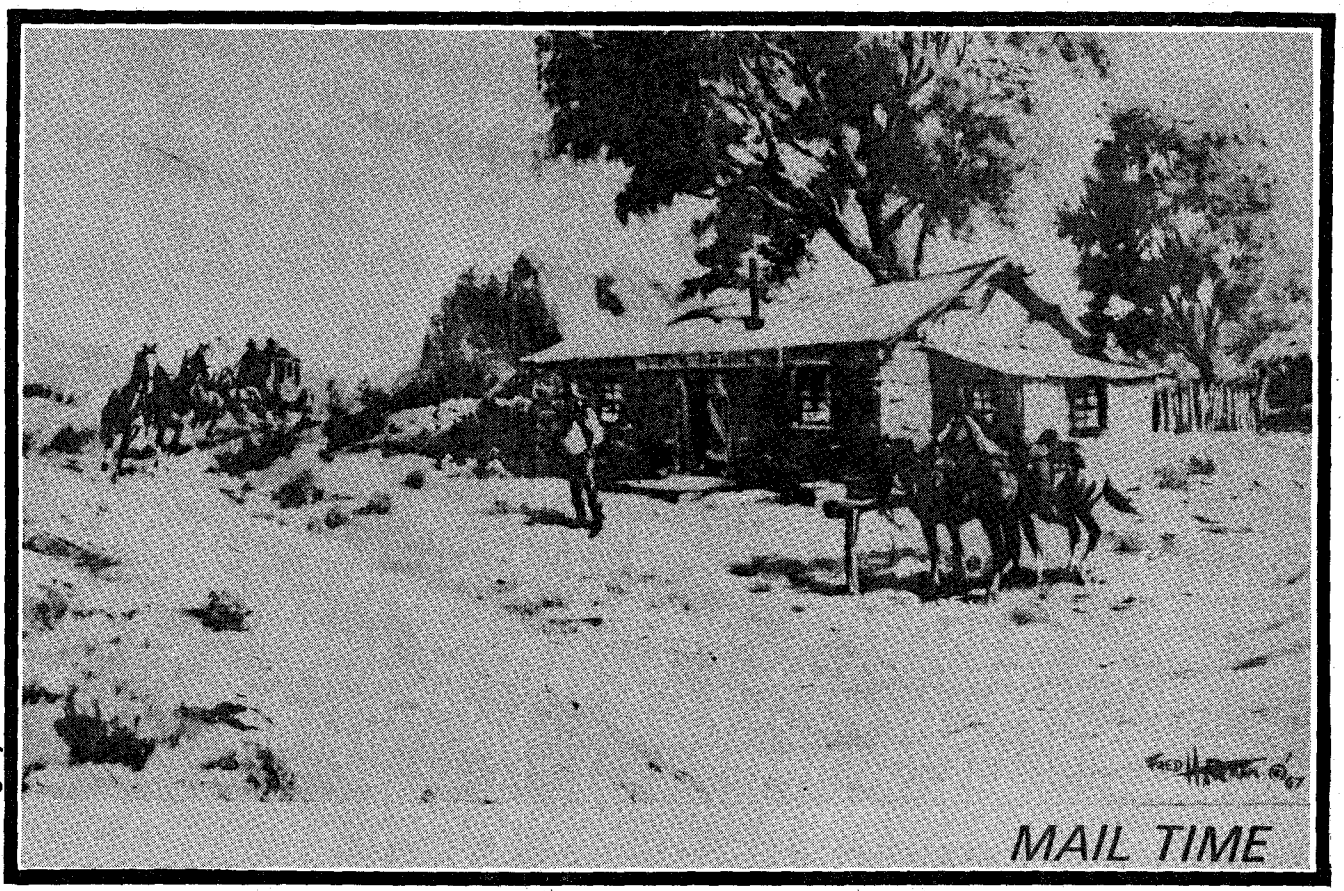
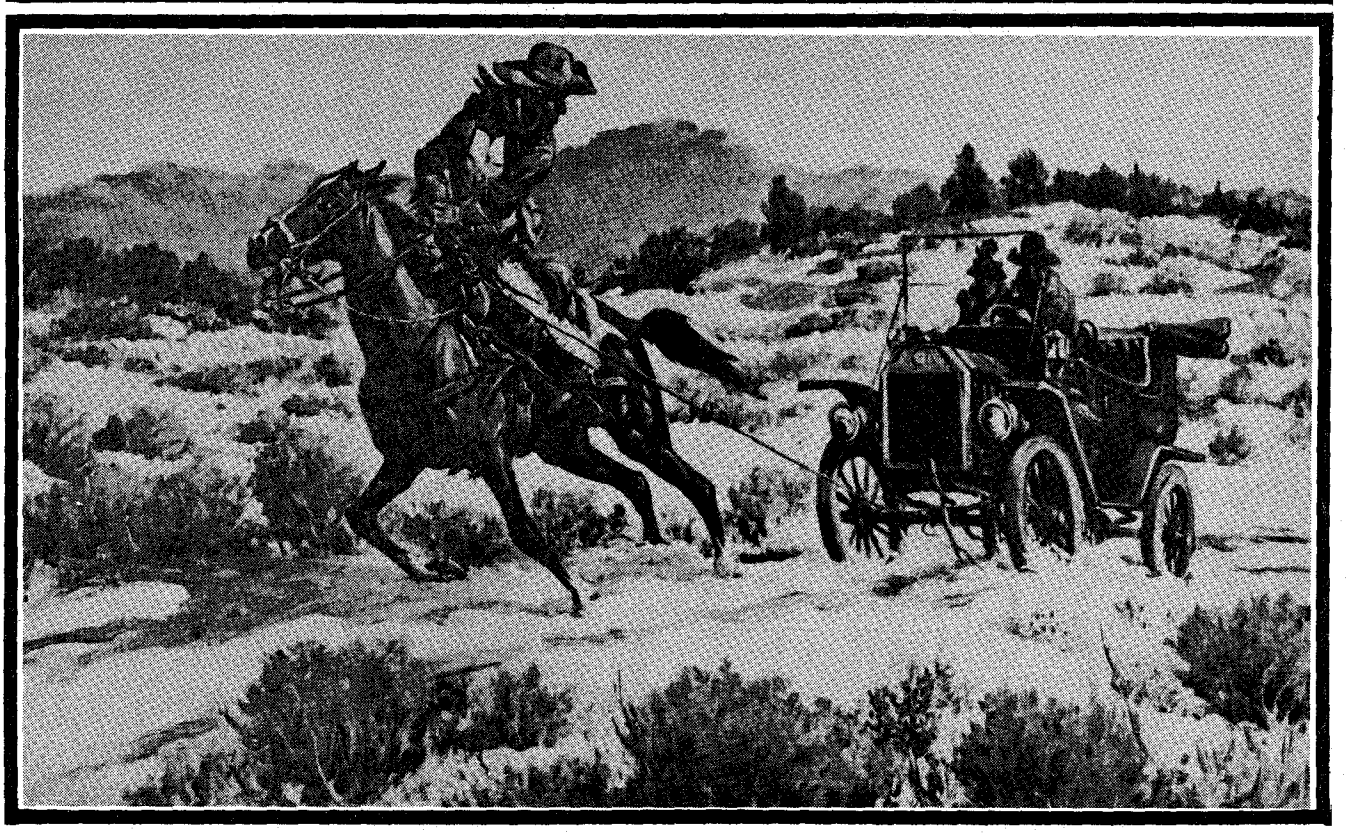


Painting by Fred Harman



Painting by Fred Harman

the world entertaining the troops in the field and hospitals. He was also active in selling War Bonds.

As the years slipped by, the strain of doing the Red Ryder daily and on Sunday became more of a chore for Fred. So with much reluctance Fred decided to discontinue the famous strip which was at the height of its popularity to devote his time to what he had always wanted to do—paint.

So, early in the 60's Fred Harman, western painter, emerged and the canvasses that he produced were soon bought up as fast as he could paint them. In a matter of a few years he has become one of the leading western painters.

His work is now booked up several years in advance, and he has exhibitions lined up in Kansas City, Dallas and the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. His wife Lola has informed me that his beautiful book, "The Great West in Paintings", has sold out, and Fred is busier than ever producing western paintings.

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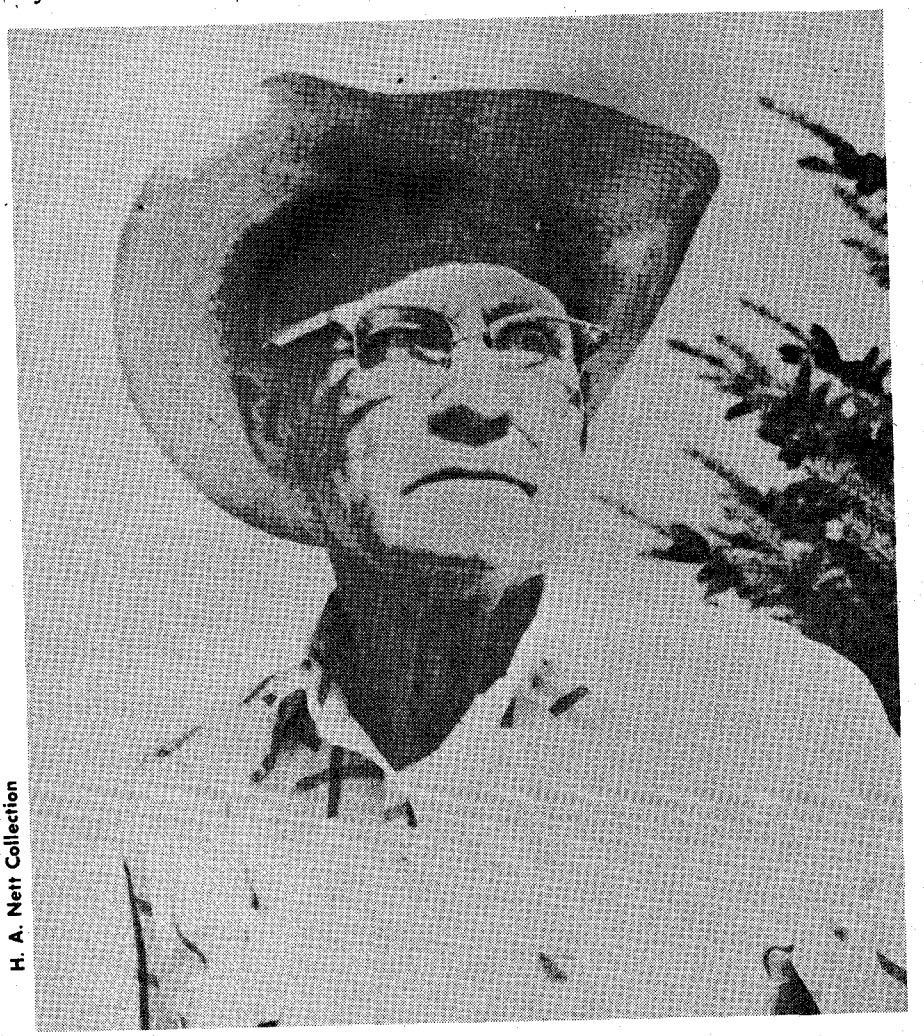
FIFTY YEARS FOLLOWING HEEL DUST

By Maurice Kildare

The half century career of a cowman who saw the free grass ranges disappear and barbed wire put up to mark off the huge ranches in Montana. H.A. "Tot" Nett Killed cattle-killing grizzlies, wolves, and tracked rustlers in his lifetime on the range.



H. A. Nett Collection

H.A. "Tot" Nett spent a life time raising cattle in Montana.

Tot Nett entered the leafy brush following the wounded grizzly, a very dangerous thing to do under any circumstances. But he had an overwhelming desire to finish off the stock-killing beast and tossed all caution to the winds.

It was shady, almost dark in the brush under the trees on Ford River. He sat down, smelling the huge bear but unable to face it. Suddenly the brush began crashing apart near at hand as the grizzly, locating him by scent, charged in blundering rage.

When it was spotted faintly through the foliage about ten feet away, there existed barely enough time to raise the .30-06 caliber high-powered rifle. Fortunately, Tot finished it off with one well-placed bullet.

That spring, when grizzlies began coming down out of the Rockies into cattle range, this one killed two yearling heifers, eating no part of them. Finding tracks at the scene of the kills, he traced them across open range to the stand of close growing timber. As he dismounted and moved towards the edge, rifle held at ready, the grizzly disclosed its hiding place by rearing upward on hind feet, fangs bared and growling. A quick aim at the heart sent a bullet into the ferocious beast that only wounded it. The hurt monster dived back into the brush. Knowing better, Tot followed. That one bear was costing his outfit hundreds of dollars in slain cattle.

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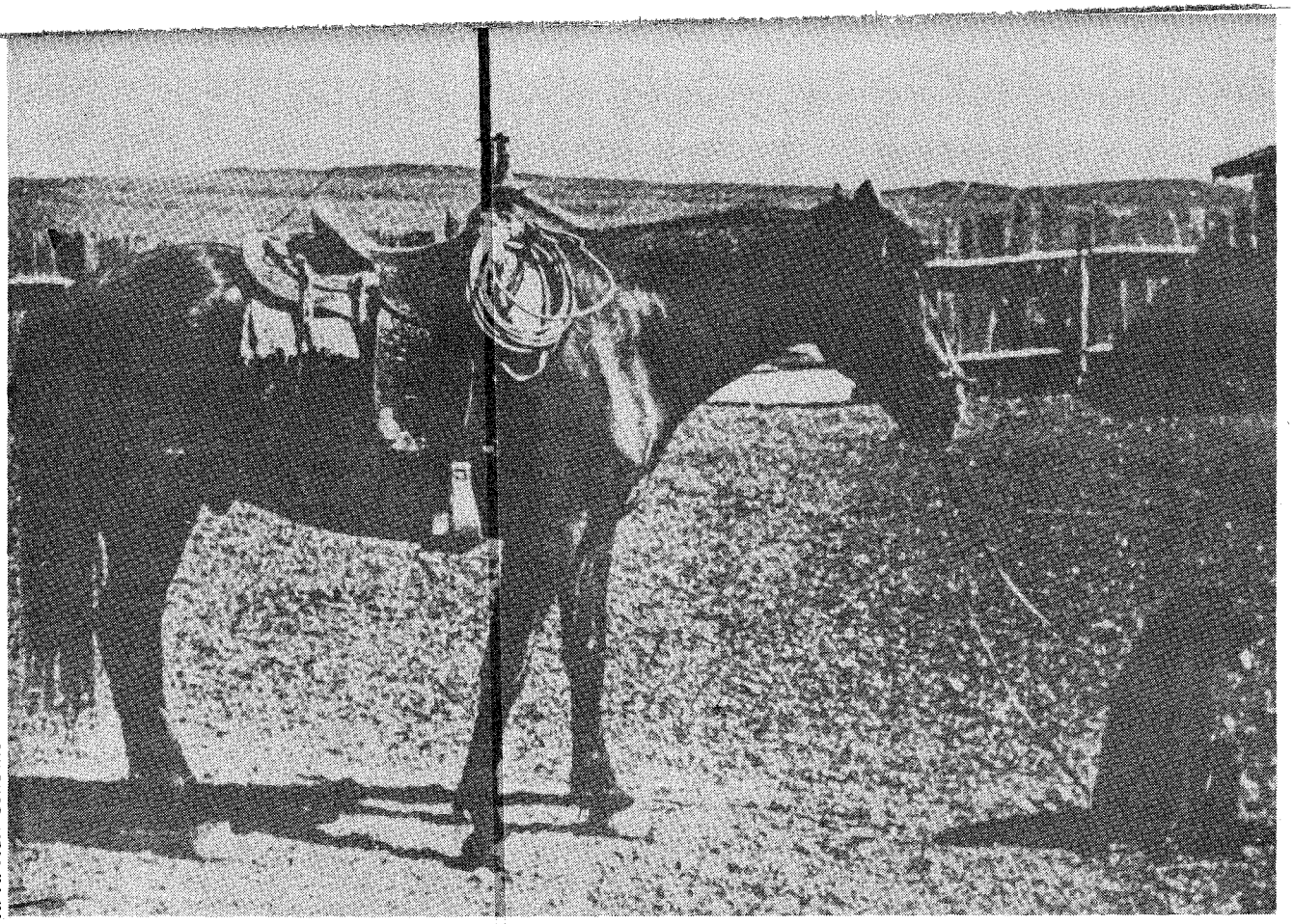

H. A. Nett Collection

Sea Biscuit, Nett's famous horse and the Labrador dog, Peter who was a constant companion.

This incident, in all his years riding after cattle, was the closest shave with death that he ever faced.

Like many other men of the glamorous west whose entire lifetime business was solely cattle, H.A. "Tot" Nett started in it when reaching man-size. In old Montana that was about twelve years of age.

Even before then he was handling livestock, working in his father's Augusta livery stable. The odor of tanbark tanned leather, the smell of greased harness and sweaty horses fairly fascinated young Tot.

His father owned cattle and horses on a nearby ranch when he was born in Augusta January 15, 1899. He began riding when a small boy. When his father sold out he started working school vacation summers for the LF ranch owned by the J.B. Long Cattle Company a few miles west of town.

He began in 1912 and in 1916 became a regular hand for $30 per month. Thus began fifty years of following cattle associated with one outfit until his retirement in 1966.

As a cowboy and cowman he saw the free grass ranges disappear and barbed wire fences come into existence. Nearly all of the big cattle companies controlling many tens of thousands of acres of range in the Sun River country were replaced by smaller outfits.

Soon after starting to work for the LF on a permanent basis, he was drawing a top hand's wages and on July 1, 1940 became general manager. Before then a lot of winter snow had sifted down, and water flowed through the coulees and creeks into the rivers, not to mention somehow surviving the ghastly winters of fierce blizzards and below - zero temperatures.

It took an experienced cow man with plenty of know-how to profitably raise cattle in western Montana of yesterday. Yet the handsome, genial and now graying Tot possessed what it required. Perhaps more than most he appreciated the beautiful land of his nativity, the wonderful land of individual freedom despite the many handicaps.

The still operating great LF is one of the most famous of cattle ranches in the Sun River country. The wide, lush coulee in which the headquarters ranch stands where Smith Creek enters Ford River (formerly designated as a creek) was originally occupied by Samuel S. Ford from Fort Benton in the early 1860's. He ran cattle in the great coulees and on the prairie ranges despite Indian raids and the often terrible winters when the largest animals froze to death.

In 1898 Ford sold 5,00 head of cattle and 7,000 acres of deeded land to E. Beach for $10,000. Ford, who had pioneered that region before any other cattlemen arrived, then moved to Great Falls.

Beach gathered and sold $90,000 worth of rough cattle. Ford had kept all kinds of stray breeds, some of them worthless. Beach brought in 5,000 head of slab-sided two and three-year-old steers to range fatten for market. The most famous picture of all cattle land was made when this herd was turned loose to graze in the coulee. It was printed in Germany.

The several Ford and Beach brands were bought in 1910 by J.B. Long who vented them all into the LF iron.

At the time Tot advanced to the status of top hand Alex Swanson was manager of the LF. The outfit was having plenty of trouble over thefts by the Blackfeet Indians on their northern range (free grass) southwest of old Choteau.

Tot was sent there as boss of a small crew to try and stop the losses cutting deeply into the company's profits. He solved the situation by calling a meeting of the tribal leaders. From then on every time the Blackfeet held a celebration or ceremony, and especially on Thanksgiving and Christmas, he gave them one or more beeves. This immediately halted the indiscriminate stealing.

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H. A. Nett Collection

New born calf being hauled in by Tot Nett before it would freeze to death in the severe Montana winters.

This off-shoot ranch north of Sun River was then known as the Willow Creek (big) section. He went there in 1922. Two years later the company decided to pull out of that area except for the small ranch that is still operating on the south side of Sun River. Tot and his wagon crew gathered 3,000 head of cattle and brought them down to the main LF ranch then running about 2,500.

At this time Hereford cows were being bred to Angus bulls. But the heifer calves were spayed and fattened, sold along with the steers as beef critters. This cross supposedly produced a heavier meat animal, being short legged and less topping out feeding required. After several years experimenting, this method of breeding was dispensed with and the LF returned solely to producing blooded Hereford cattle.

At first the outfit dipped twice a year, but as the range became eradicated with ticks, only once a year became necessary.

Thefts on the range were never large, but there was always some going on. As in all cattle land wherever a four footed animal walked, some derelict always tried to figure out a sure way to steal it for personal profit.

Many big weaner calves were rustled. Beefing on the range was a common practice, sales being easy to other ranches, settlers and even butcher shops in the small towns.

A good many thieves were caught and convicted in county court down at Helena, which stopped depredations in some measure. Tot, being a first rate cow man, took few chances. It was his responsibility to produce cattle for the company at a profit. Therefore the ranges under his control were circled often by riders, especially in the fall when thieves were most active. They caught sign of their activity if any were working.

There were also petty thieves of another stripe. One stole a horse and riding equipment, including a pair of chaps from the saddle shed and a rifle, in the middle of the night. The theft was discovered the next morning when the crew went forth to do the pre-dawn chores. Taking two men Tot went over the thief's tracks. He was captured, brought back, convicted and got a mere six months sentence in the county jail.

One stormy night a stranger walked in. He was hospitably given supper and a bunk in the crews shack. The next morning after breakfast he started hiking in the direction of Augusta. Bad weather turned him around and he was back around sundown. Again he was provided accommodations.

Before daylight the stranger disappeared along with a horse and saddle from the shed. It was a snowy, very cold day but the small, bow-legged cowboy who lost the saddle was badly put out. On another horse and borrowed saddle he took after the crummy thief who had abused a guest's privileges at the LF where no one was ever turned away.

For six weeks, despite inclement weather and sometimes losing the trail briefly, he kept after the thief. Finally he closed in, capturing his man.

Two months after going to work for the LF, Tot was raised to $40 a month. When Manager Barley Buck took over from Swanson, he was paid $150 as top hand and foreman. Later when he became manager Tot says that his troubles acquired by greater responsibilities really began.

There were no shootings, no killings anywhere on the extensive ranch that had 100 miles of drift

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fence necessary to ride and maintain. But thieves, wild animals and the climate became the bane of his existence.

While the stealing was being handled, the haying had to go on during July and August. When severe winters hurled down, cattle had to be fed in the storm - protected coulees. The hay was cut and stacked on the feeding grounds surrounded by protective fences.

Likely as not, the very first storm would drive down 2,000 to 3,000 head of elk from the Lewis and Clark range of the Rockies.

Breaking through any kind of fence, these wild animals would eat a big hay stack before a cow critter ever got to it. They had to be driven out, for in a single night they could, and did, destroy several stacks. This went on until the state established an elk patrol of riders at the base of the Rockies to spread elk on range away from cattle country.

Grub to feed the LF was brought in by the wagon (and truck) load twice a year. Tot could figure on being snowed in for at least five months with the varying temperatures mostly below zero. The only relief would be a chinook. Cattle had to be looked after in the coulees where they had been brought from distant ranges.

At the main ranch house sometimes there were also a few difficulties. One year the charming Mrs. Nett ran out of dry yeast cake to make bread. This particular spring happened to be a long one blowing in. Baking powder to make biscuits also became in short supply.

But surprisingly, there remained plenty of smoking and chewing tobacco on the storeroom shelves. None of the crew would face a ride through the deep snow and icy wind to Augusta for yeast cake. Before long Mrs. Nett was getting weary of producing nothing but biscuits three times a day the hard way.

Very soon Tot and the cowboys discovered they were surprisingly and alarmingly running out of tobacco.

With only a few sacks of Bull Durham and Golden Wheat smoking and a couple of plugs of eating tobacco left, of course some one volunteered to ride into town for a new supply. Naturally he could also bring back two little wooden boxes of dry Yeast Foam cakes.

This was done, and once more Mrs. Nett produced loaves of bread and fluffy biscuits. Thereafter the sacks of tobacco and chewing began reappearing on the storeroom shelves beside the cartons recently brought from town.

When Tot relates this story, Mrs. Nett only smiles demurely.

Late spring storms were always costly to the calf crop. When icy winds lowered the temperature to around zero and often below, the mother cows had to be watched day and night.

The new born calf would freeze to death in a few minutes unless taken to the sheds immediately. This was accomplished by hauling the little

H. A. Nett Collection

Mrs. Nett. She solved the yeast cake problem by depriving the cow hands of their tobacco.

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critter on a sled, or a piece of flint cowhide that slid over frozen grounds or through the snow. This was done with a saddle rope attached to either device. The mother cow always followed her off-spring into the shed where both were bedded in straw. But sometimes the mother, through protective instinct, would attack the rider enroute.

During the winter months the far ranging wolves killed calves and yearlings. Cowboys were furnished rifles to shoot all encountered, including black bear when they came out of hibernation in the spring.

For several years inroads of carnivore became so serious that the youngest and weak cattle had to be corraled at night. Despite all precaution some losses were still sustained.

Of course the most wanton, bloodiest of wild killers was the

H. A. Nett Collection

Cook and chuck wagon at a cow camp on LF range.

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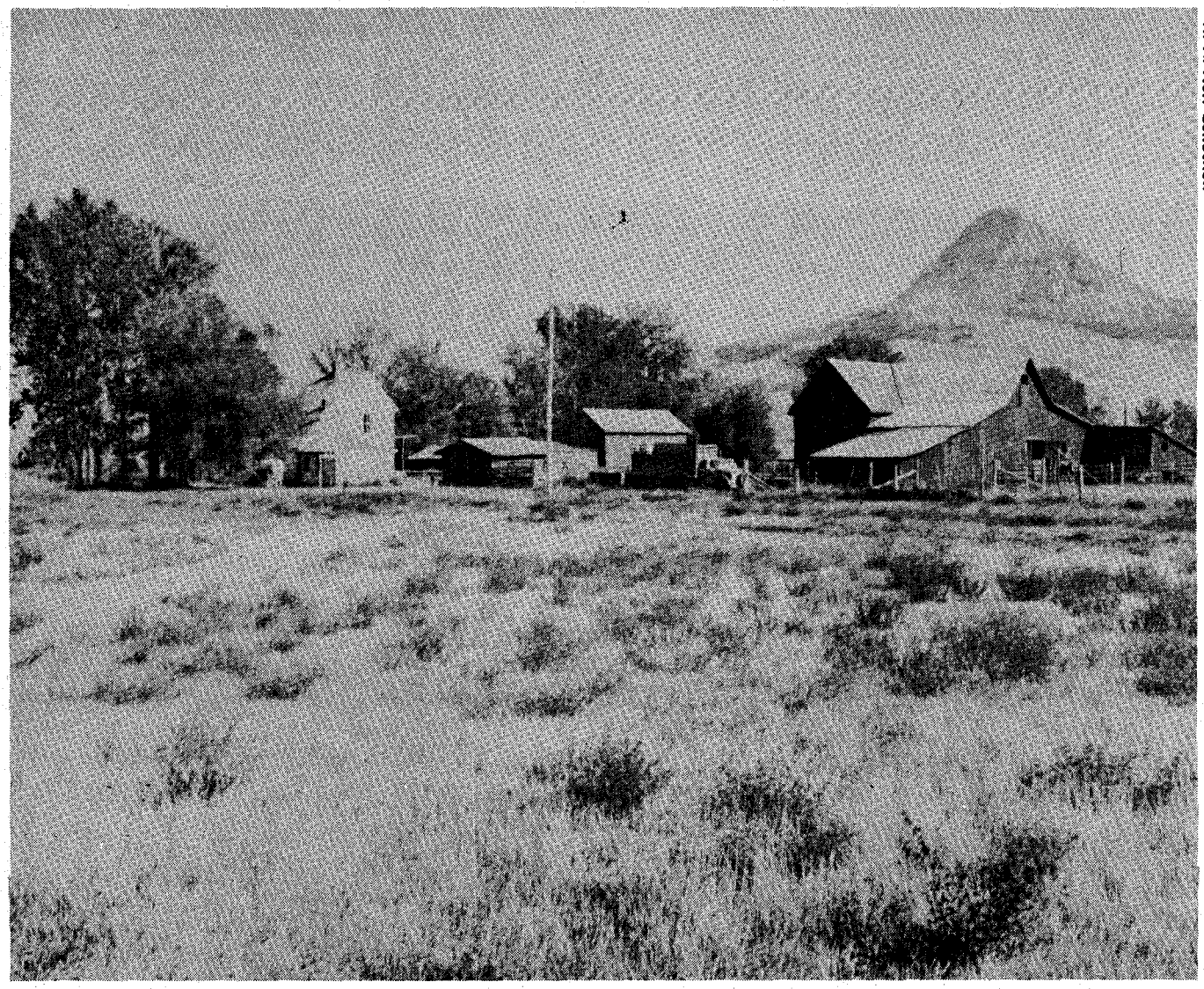

H. A. Nett Collection

The LF ranch with Haystack Butte in the background.

grizzly of which Montana seemed to have more than its share. One cold spring another big grizzly tore through the corral fence and killed six coming yearlings within a few minutes.

Aroused by the commotion, cowboys rushed from the bunkhouse with ready rifles, but the grizzly escaped the corral and disappeared into the night before they got there.

A government hunter was called in. From an airplane he followed tracks in the deep snow, located the grizzly and killed it.

On a night in 1916 a pack of wolves got inside the corral where weaned calves were kept and killed sixteen. Tracks were followed by hunters and several shot. Poison bait was then placed in strategic places where wolves ran on the range. For the time being, the packs preying on the LF were wiped out. That was a long, hard winter, the worst in thirty years, and ten percent of LF cattle froze to death.

Even hunters gave the LF a bad time raising cattle. Plain cows, big and broad and surely unmistakable, were often shot, sometimes in daylight. In one instance Tot found one shot right between the eyes, which caused him to think maybe the hunter had done so in falling dusk.

A hornless, white-face Hereford mistaken for a deer or elk? Hardly. That hunter was likely provoked after an unsuccessful hunt, had a grudge against the LF or a mighty bad case of buck fever.

Cooks on the LF and with the wagon roundup crews were an unusual set of characters. Mrs. Nett did the cooking at LF headquarters when the crew cut down to a few men. When spring opened up the vast range country, fourteen to twenty riders were needed, and a cook was hired: always one, and maybe a second for an extra crew. With each wagon there were always representatives from other ranches who were also fed.

The best cook that ever worked for the LF, Tot says, was Roy Moore. A man of uncertain age, he had a wooden leg.

In those days pies were made from dried fruits. But Moore had an odd aversion about making pies for the crew working from barest sun until after dark. He considered such cooking as pampering grown men, more folderol.

Despite Tot's demands that the crew be fed something besides bread, beef, sometimes beans (Montanan's did not like to eat beans), sow belly and occasionally eggs when available, with black coffee, Moore steadfastly refused to cook a single Pie. The situation caused much grumbling and became an issue.

Every night before rolling into soogans under the chuck wagon Moore unstrapped his pegleg. One morning before daylight when

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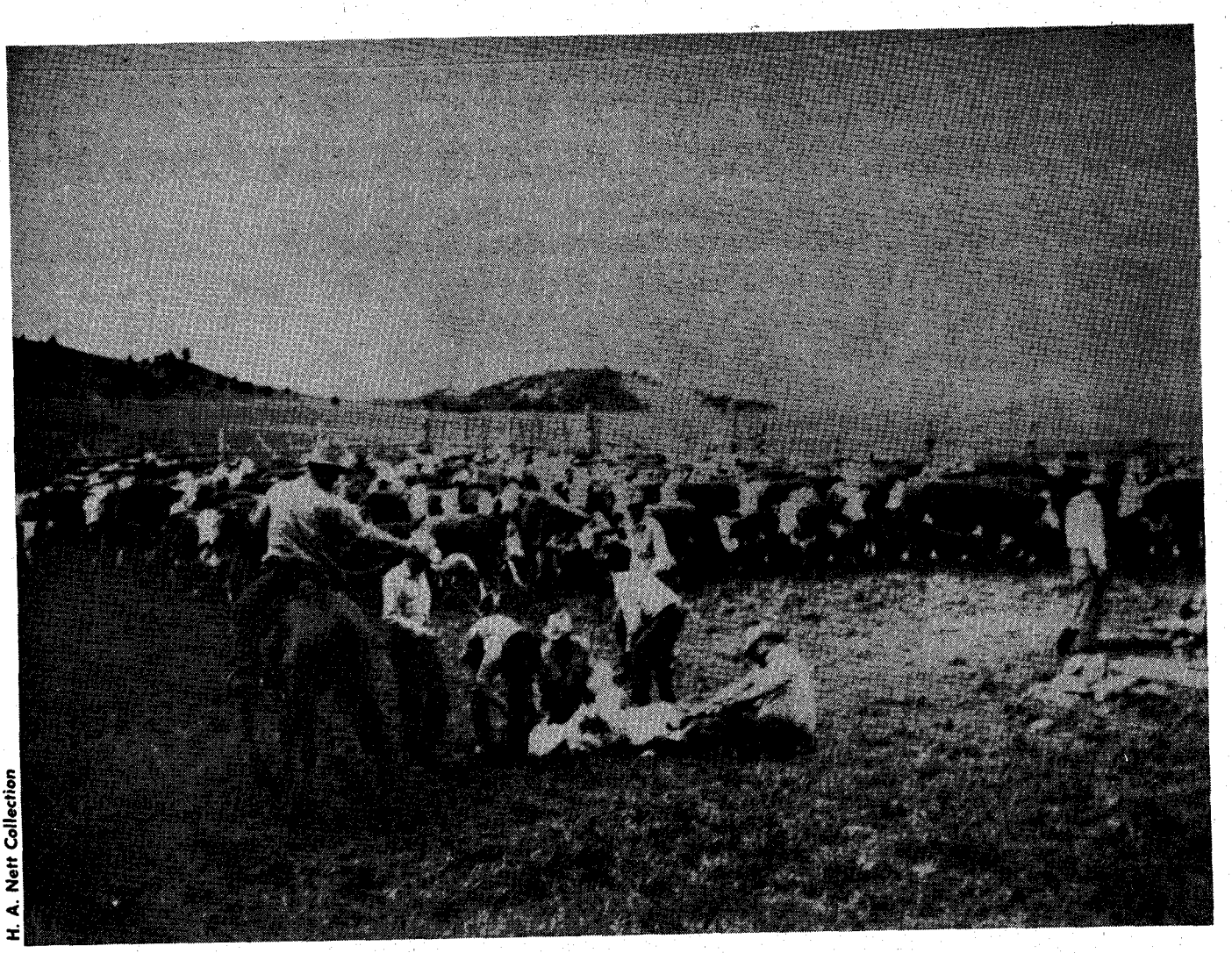

H. A. Nett Collection

Calf branding on the range, 1945:

called by the wrangler, he roused up preparing to start breakfast and found his leg gone.

Smouldering in wrath and swearing, he hobbled around with a makeshift crutch cooking breakfast. He was then informed that when he baked some pies the pegleg would be restored. From then on the LF crew didn't have any trouble getting all the pie they could eat.

On Sundays Mrs. Nett often brought chocolate and coconut cakes out to the roundup crews, which was just another working day to the men gathering cattle.

Wild game was plentiful all over the range. For a change from beef, deer or elk were sometimes killed, until state game laws were established. When too much game meat was on hand, it was jerked. It could then be prepared by boiling or pounded fine to cook with flour gravy.

Most of the LF cooks were invariably a sorry lot, few like Moore, but they were usually clean, personally and with their cooking. There was one who was extremely particular about maintaining a clean chuck wagon camp.

Cowboys were accustomed to running their horses into camp before setting them down. Consequently this raised clouds of dust. When he came on the job this cook gave specific instructions concerning chuck wagon conduct. The remuda was kept well away. The riders were to leave their mounts and *walk* into camp to eat and without dragging their feet.

When some of them carelessly did so, or a new hand raced his horse directly in, the cook wrapped a long handled shovel around his neck. He had a fifty-gallon wooden barrel cut half in two. One contained lye water in which each cowboy washed eating utensils, all metal, and then dropped them into the other half filled with fresh water.

He kept everything, even on the range, immaculately clean. Tot was sorry to see him go. But chuck wagon and ranch cooks were invariably a roving lot, always moving on to see what was on the other side of the mountain.

All the LF cooks sometime or other threw together a huge pot of SOB stew.

When asked what was used in it the Montana way Tot exlcaimed, "I sure haven't the least idea. Probably every scrap of whatever left in camp but it sure tasted good!"

There was definitely animal brains, sweet breads, chopped innards of other kinds, marrow gut and other scraps of meat seasoned and boiled all afternoon.

Very early as a cowboy, Tot wanted to be a bronc rider at the rodeos, but after a few spills he concluded that stomping the mean ones was hardly his forte. His brother, Arthur C. Nett, two years older and owning his own cattle company, became interested in team roping.

The Nett brothers became partners in this rodeo contest, making the annual affairs held at Augusta, Browning, Great Falls, Fort Benton, Helena, Dillon, Boulder and a few lesser towns.

They won contest money wherever competing, against top opposition from Montana, the

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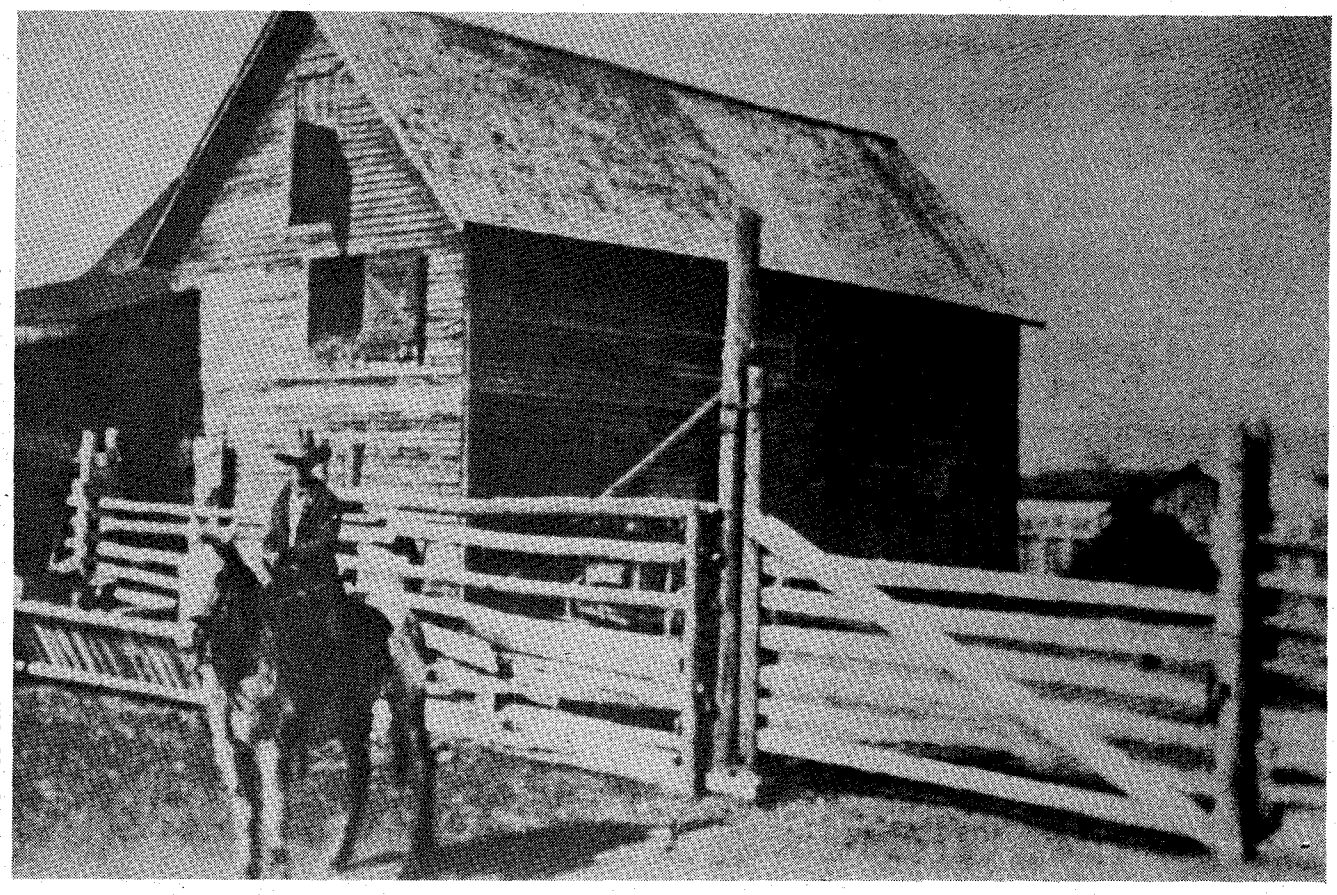


H. A. Nett Collection

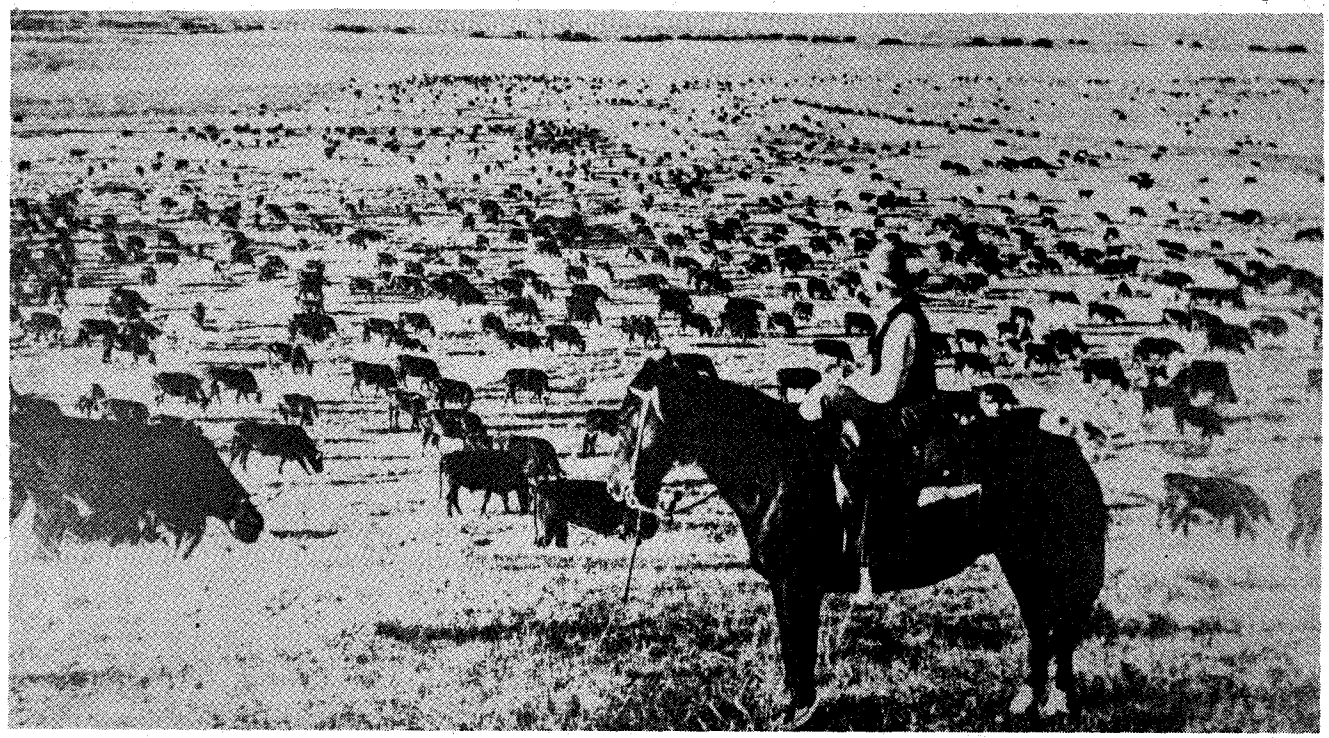
"Tot" Nett mounted on a white and blue cayuse - Morgan pinto that had to be thrown and saddled every time to be ridden.

Dakotas, Idaho, Oregon and Utah. One year at Fort Benton the brothers won two day monies and then the finals while Tot took top money in the calf tying event.

Tot had another specialty: wild cow milking. For this event he used other partners instead of his brother. Pete Cummings and Alzum Walt were his side-kickers over the longest period of years. They always won money wherever contesting.

The brothers are now 74 and 72 years of age and do not do much roping anymore. But they are still experts, far better than most in this skilled rodeo event.

Their last big winning, more than $1,000 a side, was at Browning in 1947. It was a matched roping



H. A. Nett Collection

Five thousand steers turned loose on the LF ranch

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contest, and they tied five steers in record time.

They are well known throughout the north central states and famous for their skilled team roping. But they never organized rodeos, like the Calgary Stampede, at Cheyenne, Pendleton or Madison Square Garden. They could not take the time off from their business of raising cattle to attend them. If they had been able to do so they probably would have become world champions.

Roping horses requires special training of an intelligent animal. Tot trained all his horses, and one that dwells fondly in his memory of the days gone beyond recall was Sea Biscuit.

This famous roping horse was half Cayuse - Morgan, chunky, dark red, fast as a quarter horse which is a necessary requisite and unusually intelligent. With Sea Biscuit was a constant companion, the Labrador dog Peter.

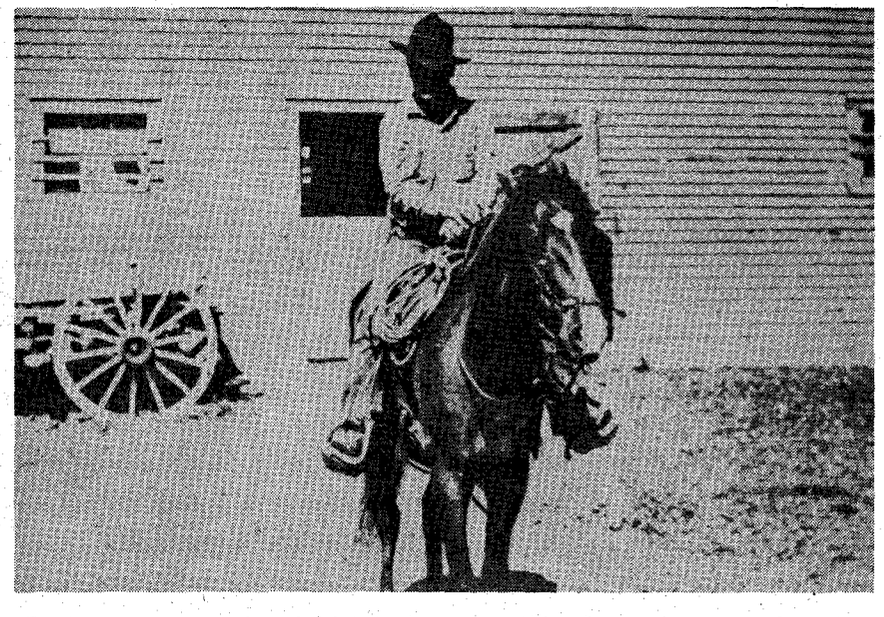
Peter was trained to stay with and hold Sea Biscuit when left alone anywhere. Furthermore, Peter, taking his task seriously, always refused to let anyone else except Tot get anywhere near Sea Biscuit. The two animals were close companions. Time, the common leveller of all, finally cut down both remarkable animals.

Of several fancied and fancy horses, and Tot had good ones, he once owned a blue and white pinto (a paint to Texans) that he always liked to ride after cattle.

But this pinto had one unbreakable idiosyncrasy. It would not stand for being saddled and mounted, having to be roped and thrown every time. From then on it was tractable and gentle as well as having other desirable traits. Still, to be ridden it always had to be thrown first.

The pinto probably had considerable Spanish mustang ancestry. It would travel all day long, farther and faster than an ordinary horse without giving out, and it was also a fast runner. Except for that one bad characteristic the pinto might have made an excellent roping horse.

After fifty years of eating trail dust, facing icy winds and burning sun, Tot and Mrs. Nett live quietly in Augusta. The bronzed veteran of the great ranges and big skies still fancies good horses and wistfully admires cattle. But his retirement has been well earned and he enjoys it, now and then taking a postman's holiday by helping out on some friend's ranch. He still has saddles, and horses hauled in a pickup.



H. A. Nett Collection

Tot Nett in 1916 when he first went to work for the J.B. Long Cattle Company.

H. A. Nett Collection

Calf branding on the LF headquarters ranch.

While on the LF that half century, Tot was unusual for the average horny - handed, rope - burned fingered cow man. He read voraciously: newspapers, magazines and books when there was time. His retentive memory is filled with all the lore and history of the Sun River country. And, again most surprisingly, he has boxes and albums full of pictures depicting cattle handling life in his own time and places.

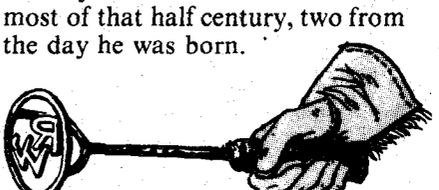
His pictures are an historical treasure collection. There are two in particular: a large one of the 5,000 head of steers being turned loose on LF range, and one of Tot hauling in a newborn calf on rope drawn sled to keep it from freezing to death.

Sadly, but true, the old range days of hardy cow men is passing. There won't be any more like Tot who fought thieves, ferocious wild animals and the howling winter blizzards to raise cattle, putting beef on other people's tables.

REFERENCE SOURCES:

Several extended interviews with H. A. Nett in his home, Augusta, Montana, August, 1971, and with Mrs. Nett. Both have been known to me for about fifteen years. Maybe longer. I interviewed him as early as 1952 about the Sheriff Henry Plummer treasure buried on the LF ranch.

Items have been added from the statements of cow men and cowboys who knew Tot Nett for most of that half century, two from the day he was born.



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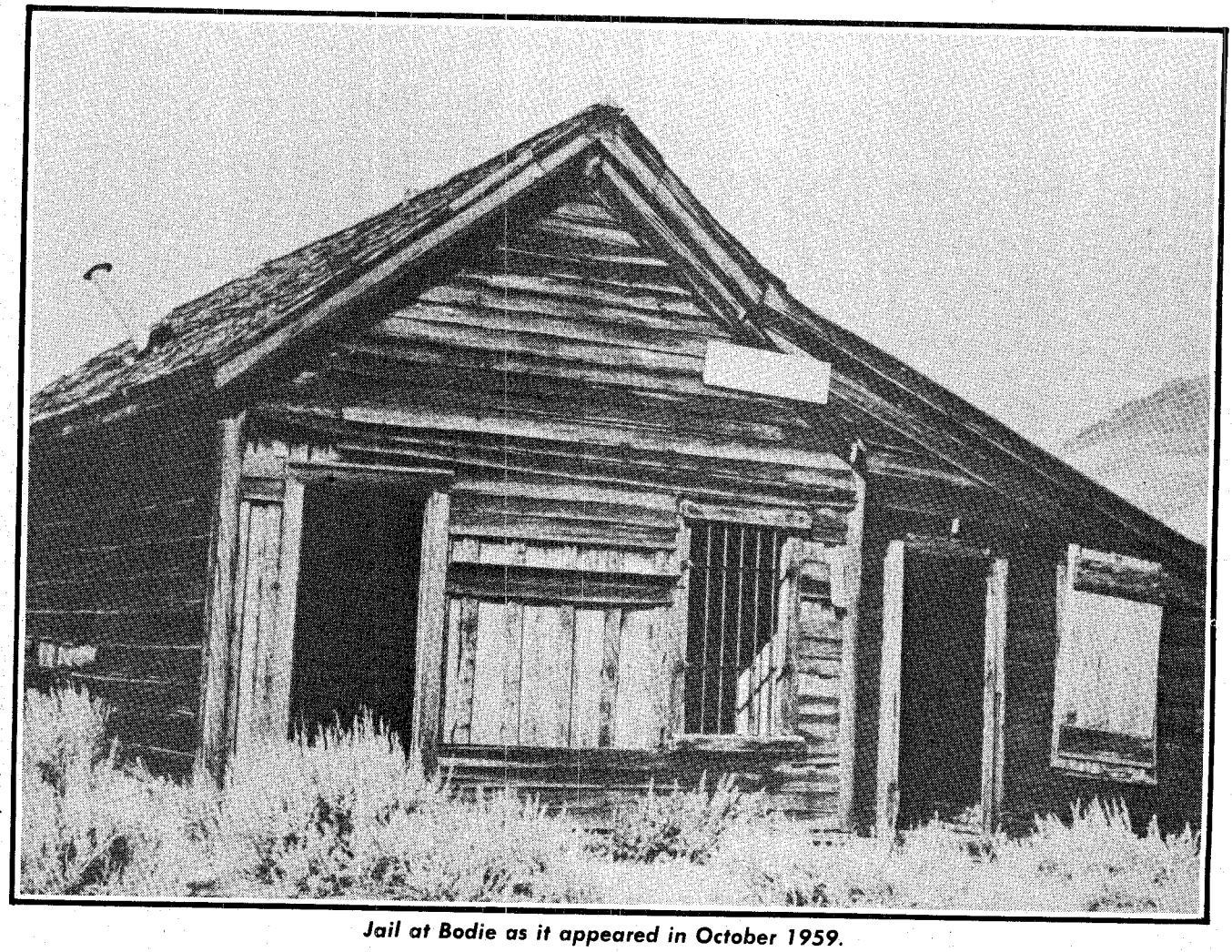
By Cy Martin

TALES OF



Cy Martin photo

Jail at Bodie as it appeared in October 1959.

In the gold diggings of California and Nevada, the expressions "A Bad Man From Bodie" described a cold-blooded killer who cussed out his victims, then killed them without mercy! Local gossips claimed there was a shooting a day and he had hard facts to back his claim!

Bad, bold, bawdy—no matter, Bodie was plenty tough! It ranked with Tombstone and Butte in early day mining camp lawlessness. Bodie became so famous as a raw western mining camp that the expression "Bad Man From Bodie" was an everyday description of its men folk who managed to stay among the living.

Bodie's cemetery in the shadow of Potato Peak was well filled with fresh tombstones each week as outlaws and quick-tempered miners settled their differences with a blaze of hot lead. Killings were so common in the hell-rising camp the residents themselves took no offense to the tale that a "man for breakfast" was a daily affair.

From the Sacramento *Daily Bee* of October 12, 1880:

"One of the peculiarities of the Bad Man from Bodie is his profanity. A Bad Man from Bodie who never used an oath is as impossible as perpetual motion or an honest election in Nevada. This trait is especially noticeable whenever he kills a man or endeavours to kill one. Whenever you hear of a man from Bodie who did not swear when he "pulled his gun" you may depend upon it that he is base metal, a tenderfoot, a man from Pioche, or Cheyenne, or Leadville.

The oath of the Bad Man from Bodie is like the cheerful warning of the rattlesnake ... His little gun nestles cosily in his right hand coat pocket, the latter generally being lined with velvety buckskin to prevent the hammer from catching and frustrating his purpose of converting his enemies into fully fledged angels. Meeting an eligible candidate for a place in his graveyard he emits his stereotyped oath and blazes away. Sometimes the bad man from Bodie entertains his victim with a short oration before butchering him ... I have seen him leap upon a billiard table and shout his defiance in the following stirring manner: "Here I am again, a mile wide and all wool.

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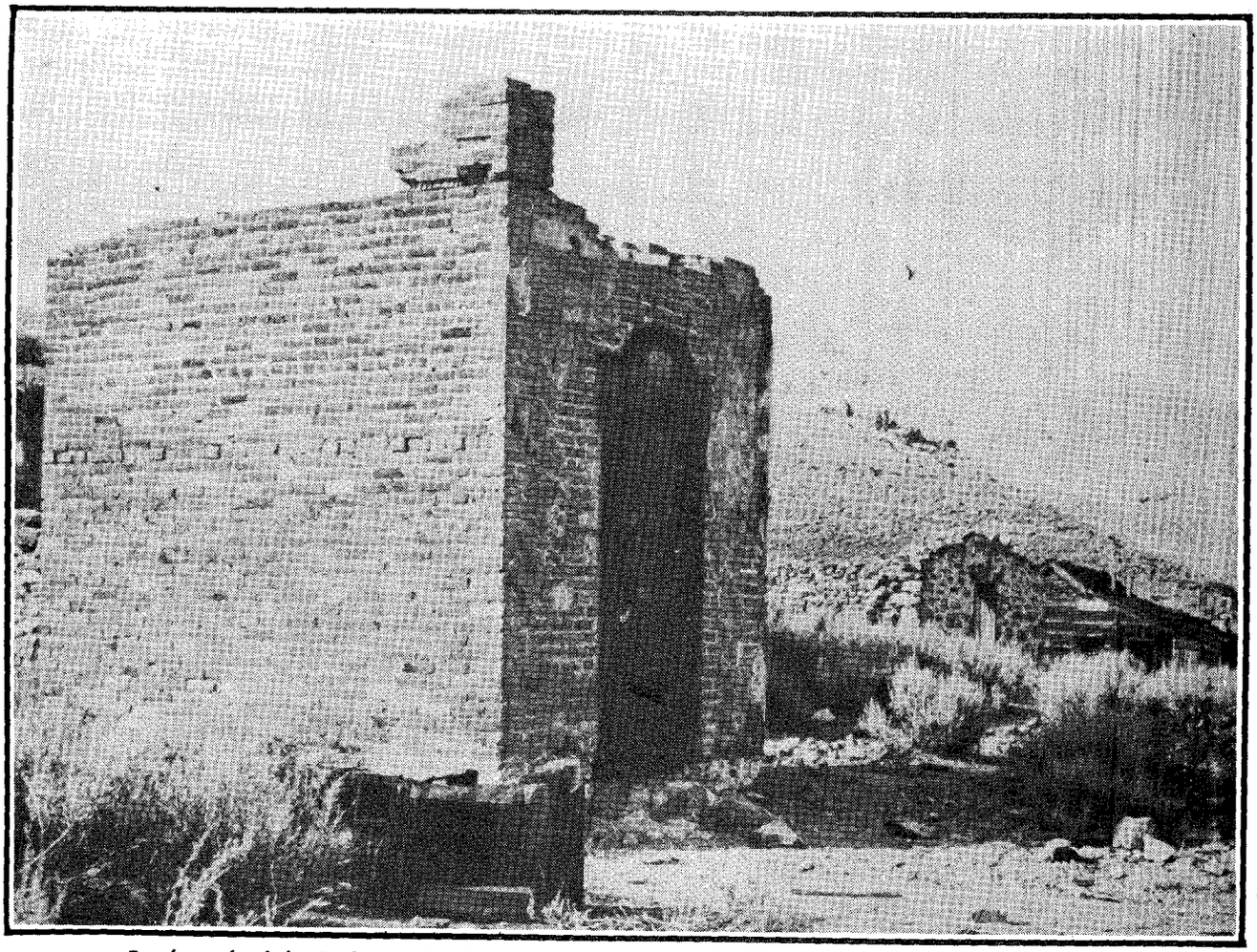
OLD BODIE



Cy Martin photo

Bank vault of the Bodie Bank. The bank was destroyed by fire in 1932. Like so many other ghost towns, the vault is standing all by itself.

I weigh a ton and when I walk the earth shakes. Give me room and I'll whip an army. I'm a blizzard from Bitter Creek. I can dive deep and come up drier than any man in forty counties. I'm a sand storm mixed with a whirlwind ... I was born in a powder house and raised in a gun factory. I'm bad from the bottom up and clean grit plumb through—I'm chief of Murdertown, and I'm dry. Whose treat is it? Don't all speak at once, or I'll turn loose and scatter death and destruction full bent for the next election."

The richness of this forbidding region, just over the line from Nevada and north of Mono Lake, was discovered in 1859, the same year as the fabulous Comstock Lode. But some twenty years elapsed before gold production reached its final pinnacle. Meanwhile, the notoriety of the camp spread throughout the western diggin's.

Indeed, so fearsome was its name that when a miner in neighboring Aurora decided to move down the canyon to Bodie in search of better work, his little daughter's tearful prayer at her mother's knee ended with: "Good-by, God. We're going to Bodie!" The impious *Daily Free Press* acknowledged the validity of the sentiment claiming only there was a deliberate typographical error in the reporting. The moppet's quotation should have read, "Good! By God, we're going to Bodie!"

William S. Body (or Bodye or Bodie), "the Dutchman from Poughkeepsie," was one of a party of placer miners who left Monoville and explored the desolate mountains to the east of the Sierras. He found gold in a high hidden valley in 1859, of course, in the best mining camp tradition—digging for a wounded rabbit which he ran to earth. When supplies began to dwindle, Body started for Monoville with a poke of high grade dust to exchange for the men's winter rations.

On the return trip, he and E.S. Taylor were caught in an outsized bizzard, and Body was exhausted. Taylor carried the freezing man as far as he could, then left him wrapped in a blanket while he fought his way through the storm in search of help. When Taylor returned, he was unable to find the spot where Body lay, although he spent an entire day searching for his lost companion.

The body was finally discovered with the thaw of the following spring. It was taken to the camp and buried on top of the hill overlooking the embryo town, which the men immediately christened Bodie in honor of the unfortunate prospector. His skull, refurbished and mounted for the purpose, fascinated customers from a place of honor on the back bar of the Cosmopolitan Saloon.

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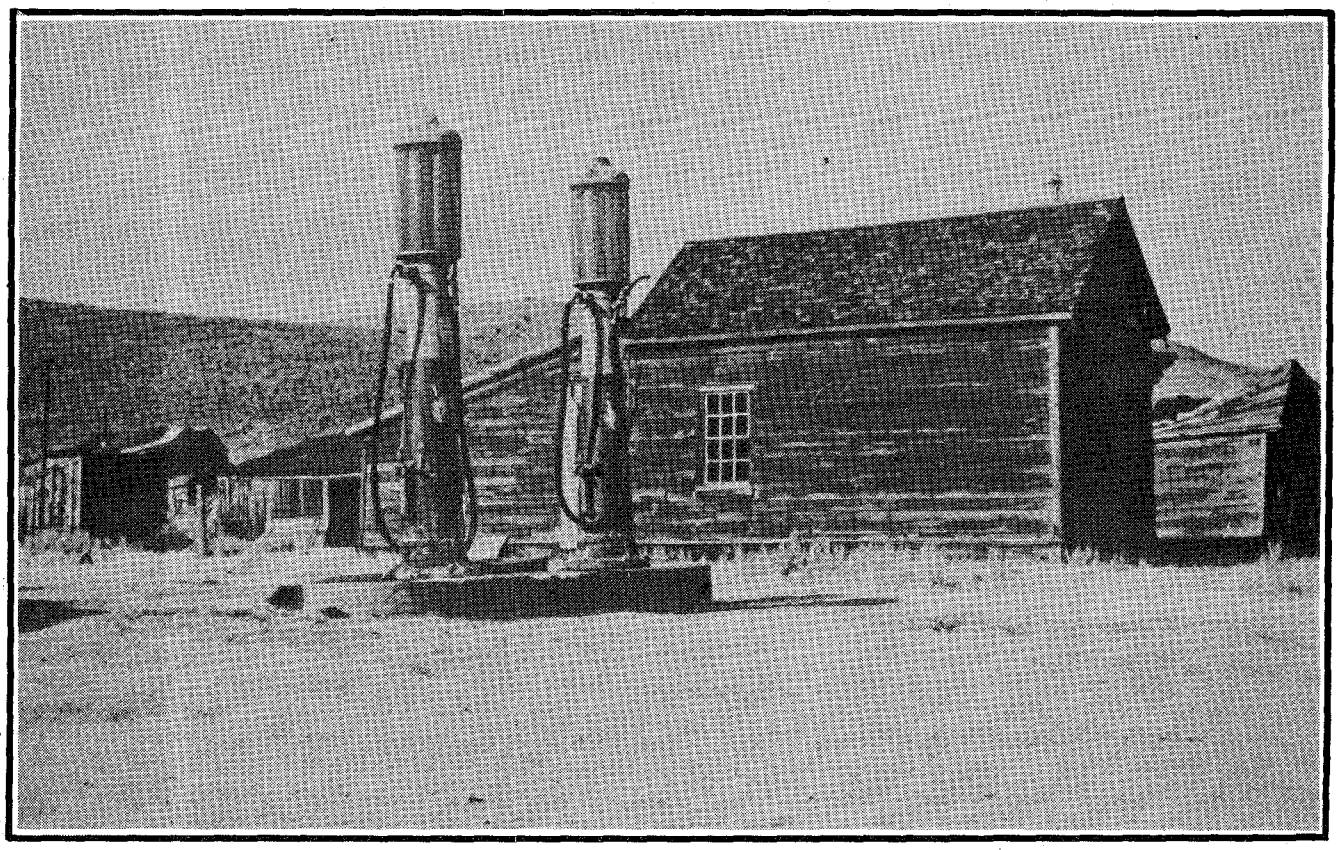

Cy Martin photo

Gas pumps in front of Boone's store, sometimes known as the Bodie store and warehouse. These pumps were used until the early 1930's when everyone finally left Bodie.

Within a year the Bodie Mining District was advertised as "Bigger than the Comstock." The camp drew men of all kinds who swarmed over the mountains and staked claims for miles around. They swelled the population until sixty saloons and gambling halls and quantities of hastily thrown together hotels and lodging houses were accommodating the sudden influx of humanity. Since the slope above Bodie was treeless, timber for mines, for buildings, and even for fuel was freighted in and sold for outrageous prices.

Colorful as was its reputation, the town itself was only a typical mining settlement of hodge-podge false-front buildings, saloons and dance halls, all doing a bang-up, hell-raising business. Highlighting the town's entertainment was the arrival of the jerk-line freighters from Carson City, carrying about twenty tons of supplies from the Nevada capital.

The Carson-Bodie fast freight was considered the best mountain route ever established. The teamsters were past masters at jerk-line driving, and they guided the twenty-horse teams night and day through the tortuous passes between the two towns. Somewhat like the trucks and trailers of today, the articulated wagon train consisted of a large "lead wagon" and three "back action" wagons to allow for the sharp mountain turns.

Every other span of horses in the twenty-animal team was harnessed with high wooden hames. From these, lanterns were hung to allow for night driving over the mountain and desert roads. The arrival of the fast freight at Bodie was more of an event than any tale of the previous night's shootings. The saloons and other buildings of the town would empty their huge crowds onto the boardwalks to view the arriving teams.

During the winter of 1877, the mines closed down when blizzards whirled snow around the barren bowl where the town lay and the drifts piled twenty feet deep. As one miner wrote, "There's nothing to do but hang around the saloons, get drunk and fight, or lie out in the snow and die." Yet early in the spring the noise of hammers mingled with the clatter of the mills, and Bodie became a wooden town of 250 buildings, with many small cabins near a multitude of mine shafts.

The population increased, first to 13,000 and then to 15,000, and wildcat promoters began to sell stock at 25¢ a share in the "Bodie Mine". For a time the camp was flooded with stock certificates instead of money. But, the tale has a happy ending—unexpectedly large deposits of gold were found in the mine, and the once worthless stock jumped to $55.00 a share.

By 1879 the camp found its stride and its many streets were solid with buildings. A Miners' Union Hall and an Odd Fellows Hall were built. A church was constructed from funds collected in a single night's soliciting of the many saloons, parlor houses, and gambling dens.

Three breweries and a bank established by Mark Hopkins were quickly added to the little city, along with three newspapers. *The Bodie Standard, The Esmeralda Union,* and the *Daily Free Press* reported the wild and colorful life of the raucous camp, whose days were well punctuated with shootings, brawls, and stabbings. It was not unusual to average a shooting or stabbing death per day for weeks on end, and two stagecoach robberies in a week was too common to deserve much attention.

Bodie soon became known as a "Shooting Town" in which few criminals were ever brought to trial. There were two adjoining cemeteries, one neatly fenced and the other reserved for gamblers,

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gunmen, and fancy women. But both were well populated with those who died from bad whiskey or poor doctors. Six men died in shooting scrapes within a single week in 1879.

Two gunmen, Ed Ryan and Dave Bannon, while roaring drunk got into an argument as to which was the better shot. They staggered out behind the saloon to test their marksmanship. They burned powder against one another at such a close range and with such lightning draw that each shot the other through the heart. A double funeral was held the following day.

There can be no doubt, however, that Bodie, during the 1878-1881 bonanza, was just about as lively, sinful, invigorating, money-drenched, deadly, fascinating, and lawless as any mining town could ever be. As a minister commented, after visiting Bodie in 1881, "It is a sea of sin, lashed by the tempests of lust and passion." It may not have been all that wonderful. But, with a population of 10,000 to 13,000 during the boom years, there were sixty saloons and gold and silver literally poured out the side of Bodie Bluff from thirty or more mine shafts.

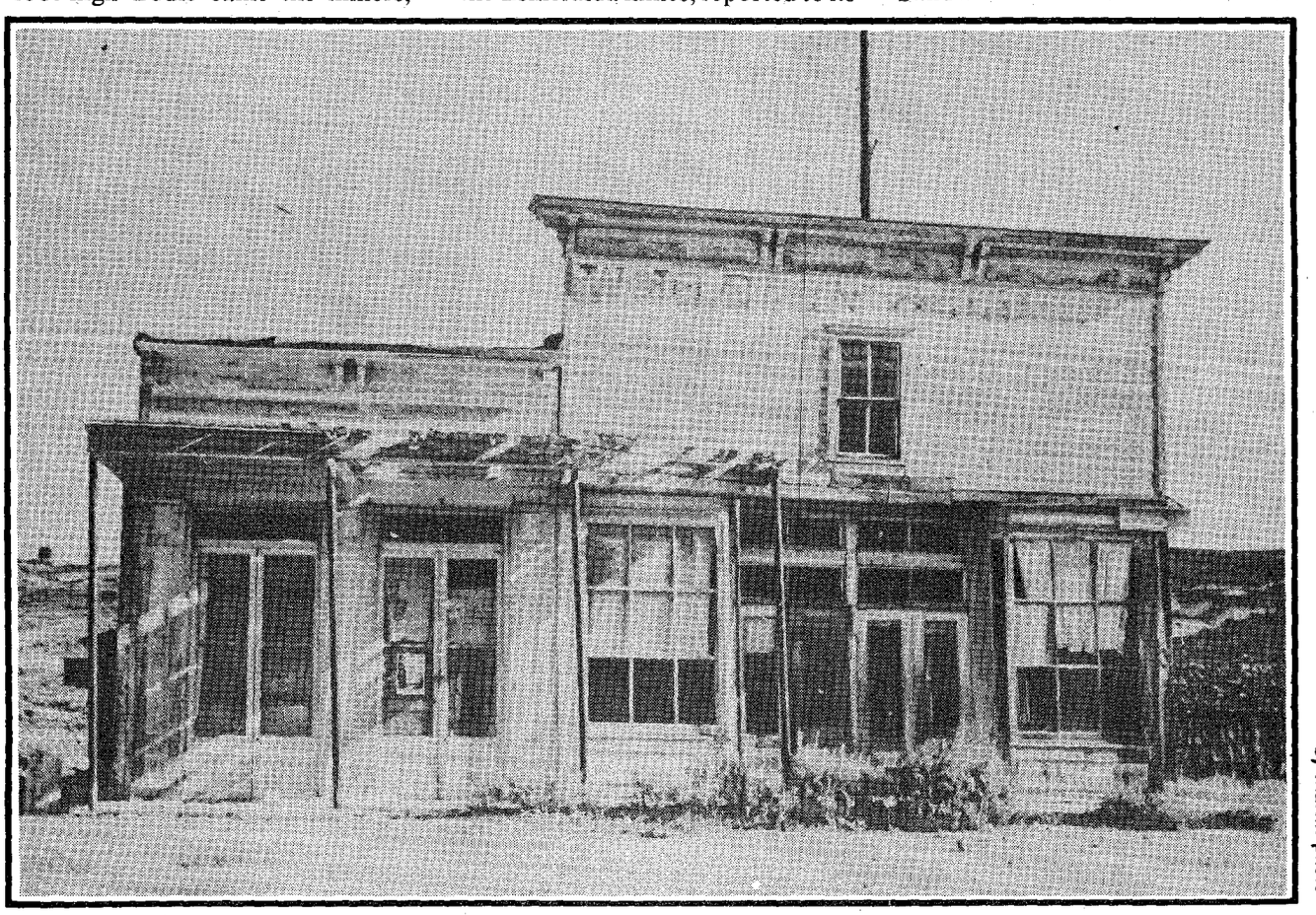
Up the barren canyons to 8,400 foot-high Bodie came the miners, drifters, adventurers, dreamers, and scalliwags who followed the golden riches back and forth across the Sierra Nevada. Some made the trip a dozen times in the thirty years since John Marshal found the first gold nuggets at Coloma in 1848.

Having dined at Stewart's Hotel, the Arlington, the Bodie House, Brown's, the Occidental, Grand Central or Windsor, the off-duty miner was confronted with a bewildering choice of watering places on which to squander his patronage. He had the choice of Wagner's Corner, Parole Saloon, Rifle Club, Cabinet, Senate, Commerical, Champion, Peters, Aldrige's, Gymnasium Hall, Marks' Saloon or the Bonanza. At all of these oases the foaming products of the three local breweries—the Bodie, the Pioneer, and Fahey's—were the favored chasers to a shot of red eye.

The alcoholic juices flowed through everyone's veins. The legendary "Bad Man from Bodie" may not have existed as a single individual, but as a conglomerate "bad man" he most certainly did.

In 1877, the *Sacramento Union,* always fascinated by the news from the Esmeralda mines, reported to its startled readers Bodie was widely known as the scene of "the wildest, maddest years the West has ever known." Naturally Bodie was swollen with a surge of pride and made every effort to justify this ferocious reputation. The local shootings, bludgeonings, stabbings, hackings, horsewhippings, gouging, and other casual mayhem vied for space in the *Daily Free Press* with the almost daily accounts of larceny on a grand scale. There was hardly room for the minor local calamities, such as the death of miners by all manner of cave-ins in the pursuit of their regular occupation.

A company of *East Lynne or Ten Nights in a Bar Room,* both favorites in the Old West, frequently performed at Miner's Union Hall. After the show, when real high life was in order, the reveler could save his final thirst of the evening for one or both of the town's resorts of quality and fashion. These were the Mason Doree Restaurant where the best quail in aspic in the Esmeralda District was served for supper and the Philadelphia Beer Depot, "Opposite to Wells Fargo, the Handsomest Saloon in Bodie and Patronized by all Classes. Sandwiches for Customers at All



Cy Martin photo

The U.S. Land Office at Bodie when it was first being settled. It later served as a power company office, a general store and finally as a boarding house.

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Hours."

In these golden days there was little or no effective law in Bodie, and there is no record of any of the gun fighters, knife fighters, or stage robbers being caught and more or less being permanently jailed. There was one particularly unpleasant chap who was lynched by the local "601" vigilantes after shooting a man in the back for objecting to his dancing with the man's wife at the 1887 New Year's Eve party. But such frontier justice never happened again in the wide open town.

As a result of this rich background of rompin' and stompin' Bodie was rough and tough, and the Bad Man from Bodie took his place in the Western legend along with Pistol Pete, Deadwood Dick, and Wild Bill Hickok. Wells Fargo, shipping large quantities of bullion out of Bodie, was very much aware of the Bad Man. "Throw down that box!" was a commonplace roadside conversation.

The gold and silver poured out of the ground, and the Bad Men from Bodie did their level best—or their crooked best—to see it didn't reach the security of the Carson City Mint. Shipments of $25,000 in bullion were common, with at least one shipment of $50,000 in gold—over 1,000 pounds—heading down the narrow canyon to Aurora and points north.

The Bodie Standard of September 5, 1880 mentions three shootings and two stage robberies so casually we can only assume there was nothing unusual about the particular day's happenings. One group of Bodie Bad Men held up the stagecoach into bodie one afternoon, then waited around for the dawn stage the next morning and robbed it, as well.

Milton Sharp, noted for his charming manners, good looks and cultured speech, made a specialty of single-handed robberies of the stages along the Smith Valley Road from Carson to Bodie and Aurora. In June 1880, he robbed a stage near Wellington and while being hunted for that holdup, broke his rule of working alone for the first time and used a helper.

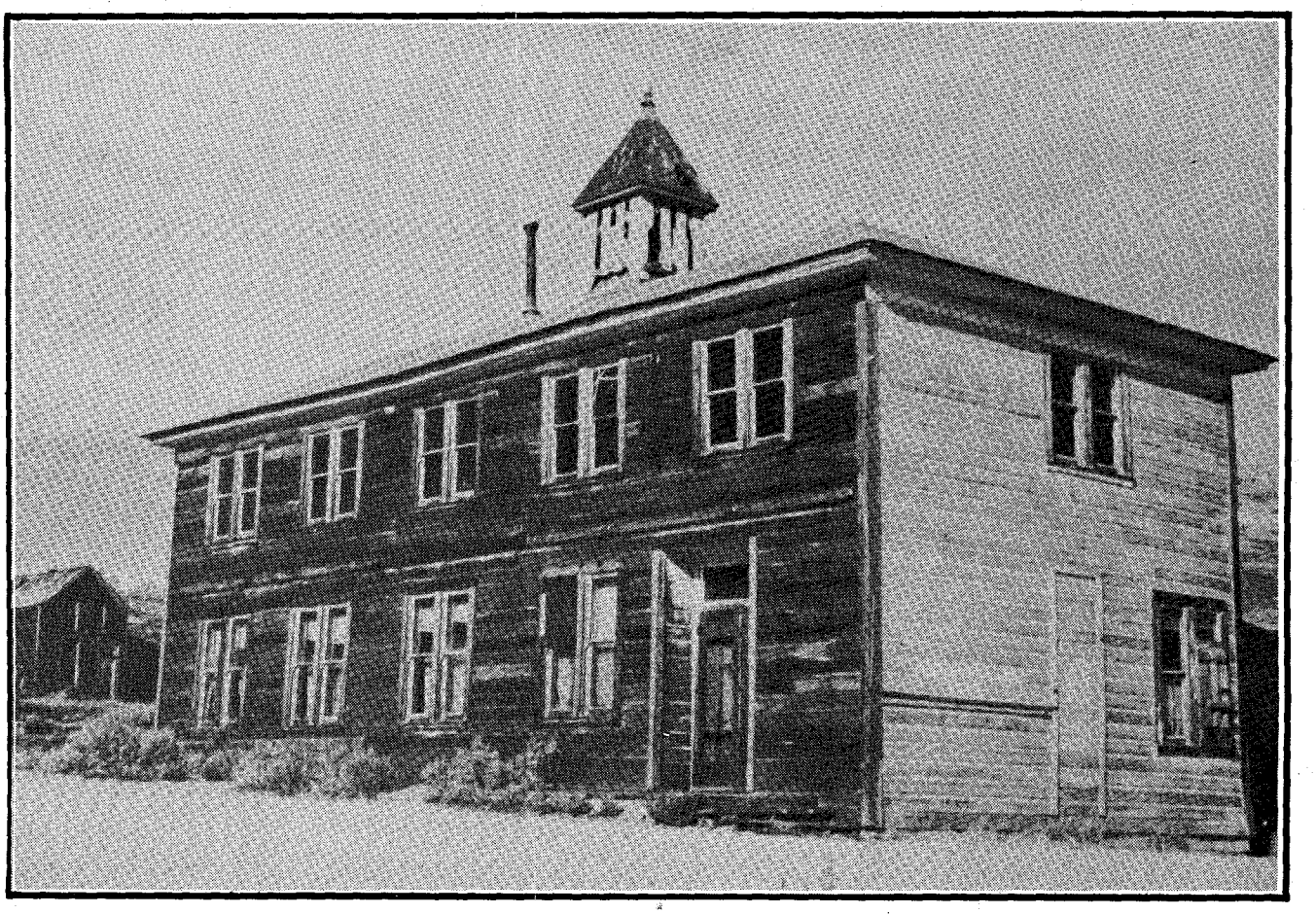
A Wells Fargo detective tracked him by moonlight to his hideout, and Sharp's man opened fire. The detective returned the fire, killing the man. But Sharp ambushed the officer and wounded him in the arm. In the resulting melee, Sharp caught a nearby stage driver offguard and made away with the express box of bullion bound for the Carson Mint.

The stories vary, but either the laundry marks on the slain man's clothing, or his carpet bag led the detectives to a San Francisco rooming house where Sharp took his loot. Here Sharp was arrested taken to Aurora and jailed.

The jailers let him have a small pen knife to carve toys for the town's children. Then on one dark night he used it to dig through the mortar, lifted the bricks out, squeezed quietly and breathlessly through the wall and escaped. Again he was caught and returned.

This time they shackled him with heavy leg irons. But again he made a desperate escape on a cold November night. Sharp dragged the heavy chain shackle across the bleak, freezing desert to Candelaria. Cautiously he threw sand on the window of a friend, praying he would get help before he froze to death. Yet, the sheriff arrived at just the wrong moment. This time he went to the penitentiary at Carson.

Again he escaped and dropped out of sight completely. He succeeded in reaching New Orleans, started an honest business, married



Cy Martin photo

Schoolhouse at Bodie, California. It was in use until the early 1930's.

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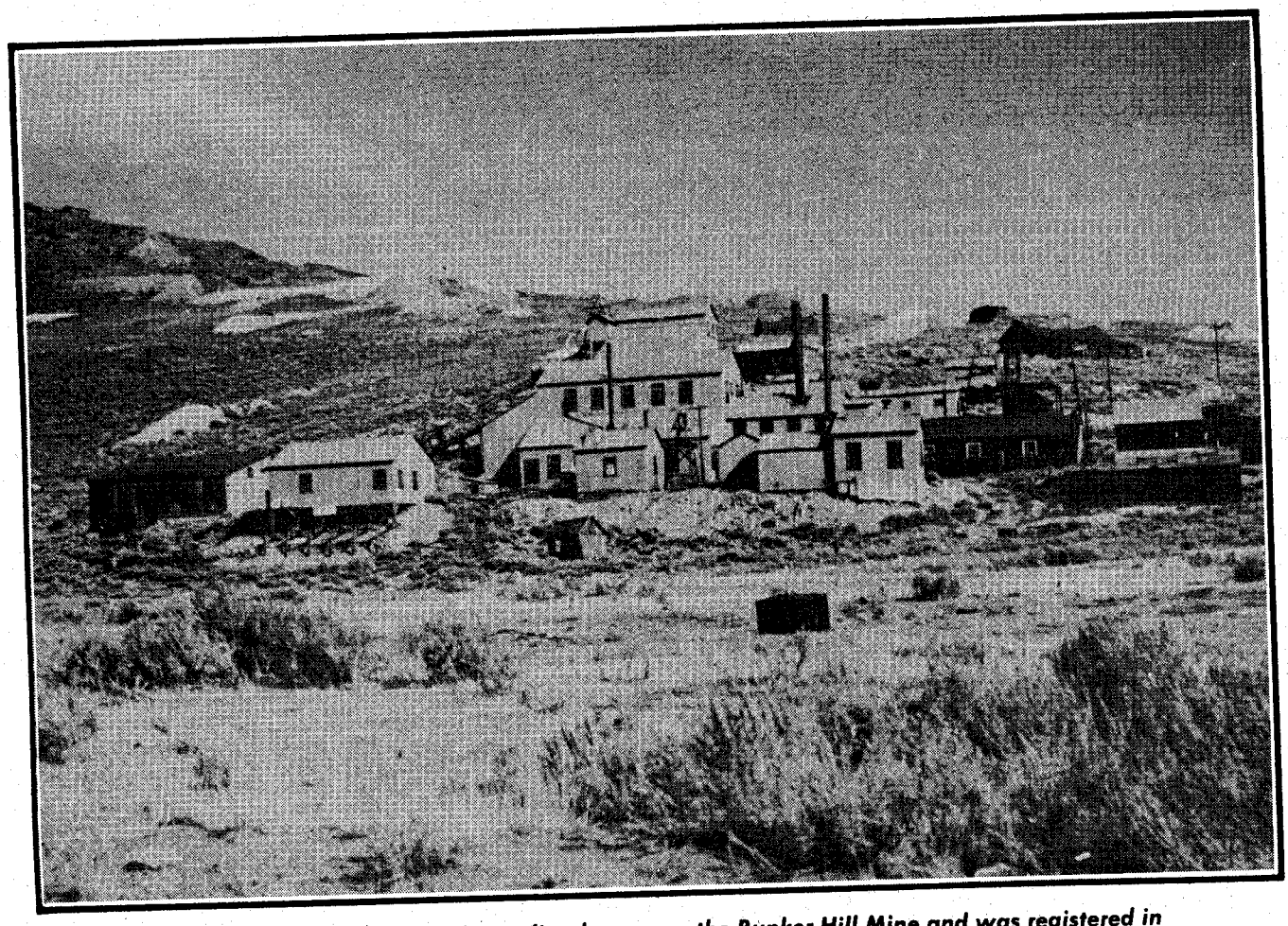

Cy Martin photo

The Standard Mine and Mill was first known as the Bunker Hill Mine and was registered in August 1859. The success of this mine resulted in the 1878 rush to Bodie. In a year the population rose to 10,000. It was destroyed by fire in 1898, but rebuilt. It ceased operation in the 1930's.

and fathered two children. Respected and well liked for years, he relaxed and enjoyed life until during a Mardi Gras he found he was seen by a man from Nevada.

He informed his family he was "called away for an indefinite period" and gave himself up. He was quietly returned to the Nevada prison where he was a model prisoner.

A few years later, Governor Colcord pardoned him and he returned to his family, became a respectable citizen. All later records indicate he lived out his life as a popular and honest man.

Wells Fargo's shootingest express messengers of the period, Eugene Blair and Mike Tovey, were finally brought to Bodie. Their sharp-shooting abilities were proclaimed by a wide and exclamatory press. Every time Blair fought off an attempted holdup, the company presented him with a new weapon, much the same way as it presented other drivers with handsome engraved watches.

Blair was a firearms collector of heroic proportions and defended his coaches with accurate gunfire. He soon owned an armory which sagged under the weight of Henry rifles, Starr's Navy pistols, Allen and Wheelock's revolvers, Griswold and Grier's Army Ordnance, Leech and Ridon Model Colts and terrible sure-shot Shawk and McLanahan eight-inch cavalry revolvers.

Most of these were selected by Wells Fargo because of Blair's well-known Confederate sympathies. When Blair went into action, the Confederacy was represented by everything but cannon from their Tredegar works.

Bodie was not only unabashed by its own wickedness, it never tired of bragging it was even tougher than Candelaria, eighty miles to the east. There, the common report had it, miners with a toothache simply tamped home a charge of giant powder and then chewed on a fulminate cap to eliminate the offending bicuspid. Wells Drury in *An Editor on the Comstock Lode,* reported a Virginia City undertaker's remark which enchanted Bodie. "We never get any breaks in this business," lamented the shroud merchant. "As soon as the local talent get to thinking they're tough they go try it out in Bodie and Bodie undertakers get the job of burying them."

John Jayes Hammond recalled that in 1879, during the first week he spent in Bodie, when the town was really feeling its oats, there were six fatal shooting frays. The maimed were constantly seen in the streets, bandaged and groaning and in search of sympathetic ears to listen to their side of the argument.

Many fabulous and colorful characters reached Bodie, but none were more appealing or more fascinating than the beautiful Madame Moustache, the first "lady gambler." The first record of her appears in 1854, when she stepped off the stage at Nevada City, a dark-eyed, fresh faced girl, dressed in the best of taste. She promptly opened a gambling establishment, dealing vingt et un (21) and was an immediate success. The miners liked the way she paid off bets with a friendly smile. Even the town approved of the manner in which she kept peace and order in her es-

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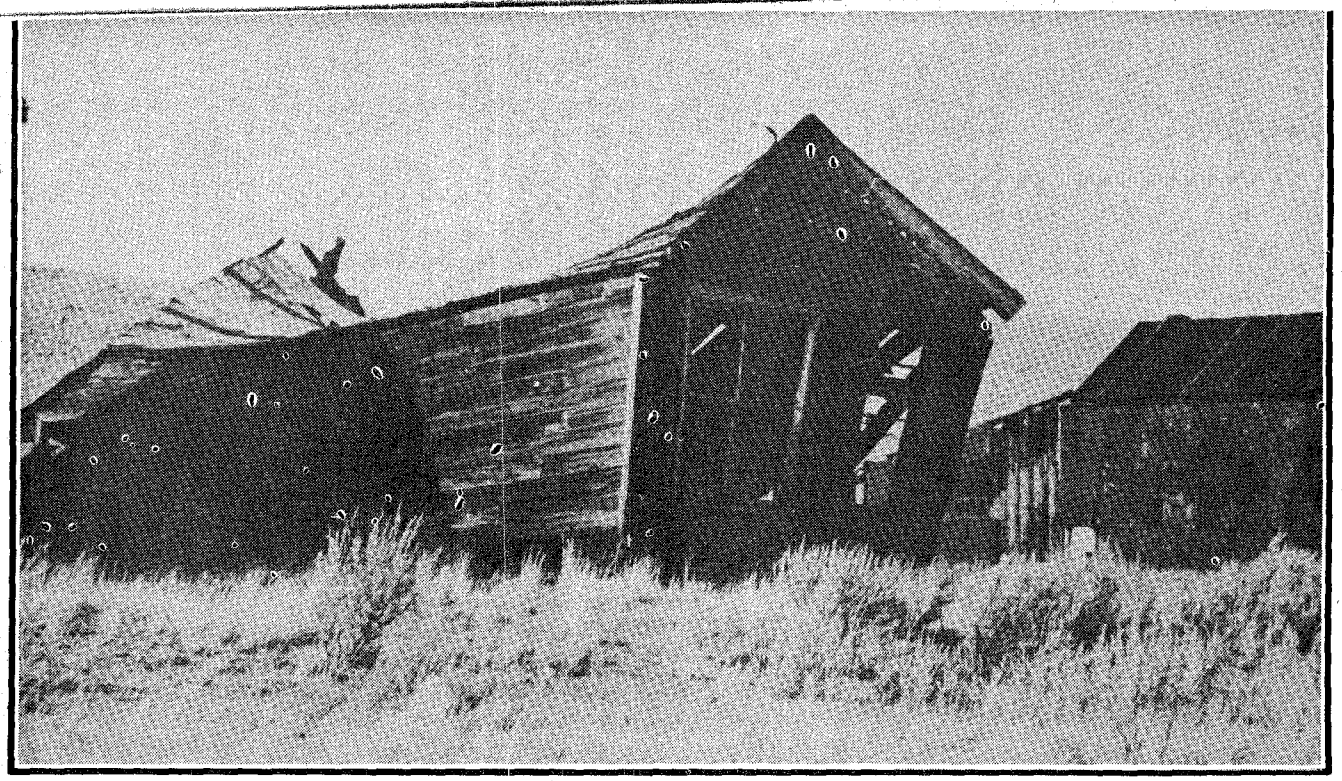

Cy Martin photo

The Solderling Assay Office as it appeared in 1959. It was reported that Solderling went to Germany to learn the cyanide process and become an expert in his field. The building is now gone.

tablishment.

After a year in Nevada City she wandered from California to Nevada, always gambling and always a favorite. She was generous to the unfortunate, and she exercised considerable influence over the rough miners. It was told that at Pioche, on a wild and riotous payday night, she broke up a pistol-flourishing mob by joking and laughing with the angry men.

She kept a watchful eye on the young and inexperienced, protecting more than one youthful miner from a fleecing at the hands of some unscrupulous barkeep or dance hall girl. She served champagne instead of corn whiskey, and an orchestra played instead of the customary sodden piano player. This remarkable woman enjoyed the friendship, admiration and respect of thousands of miners throughout the raw, wild, mining camps of the west in the sixties and seventies.

Yet the last years of her life were sheer tragedy. She amassed a considerable fortune by her gambling and purchased a beautiful ranch in eastern Nevada. She married and settled down with her husband to the quiet life of pleasant rural activity. She most properly turned her property and all her money over to her husband, but he proved to be a worthless rascal who squandered everything. Then, as expected, after he wasted her entire fortune, he promptly deserted her.

The emotional schock produced a change in the fortunes and the appearance of Madame Moustache. All early records indicated she had a fresh, girl-like beauty and vivacity. Now her features coarsened, and a growth of dark hair appeared on her upper lip and she received the distasteful name of "Madame Moustache."

Her old, light touch, and her skill as a dealer deserted her. And she failed to rise from the grinding poverty which followed her from mining camp to mining camp. Hairy-faced, features coarsened and in her late forties, she was an object of sincere pity.

She drifted from camp to camp until finally she reached Bodie and the last escape left. "On the morning of September 8, 1879 her dead body was found about two miles south of Bodie, a bottle of poison lying near by. Let her many qualities invoke some leniency in criticizing her failing," reported the *Daily Free Press.*

The lady with the horsewhip occupied the front page of the *Daily Free Press* of February 3, 1882 and for several days thereafter. At the close of school the day before (the scene of the outrage still stands) Miss Florence Molinelli returned to her family with the tearful report that as she was leaving the classroom a number of boys pursued with choice four letter epithets which they'd learned in the less refined Parole Saloon. The words of these infamous sayings were blushingly breathed into the outraged ear of Mrs. Molinelli.

Anger rose and she reached for the ever-present square-faced bottles of Stoughton's Bitters. This family remedy always occupied a permanent place between the French Clock and the vase of pussywillows on all the best mantels in Bodie. Thus fortified, she put on her shawl and bonnet.

Mrs. Molinelli paused briefly at the home of Dr. J.W. Van Zandt, since her husband was underground at the North Noonday Mine at the time. The doctor consented to escort her on her mission of justified vengeance. She made a small purchase at the hardware and undertaking establishment of Charles Kelly: "Coffins, caskets, and Shrouds Always on Hand. Also English Bulldogs, self-cooking Revolvers and Hercules Giant Powder."

The purchase was later described as "A Small bull dog or whip, four or five feet in length." Just outside Wells Fargo & Co., banking office she encountered the youth named by Florence as the loudest of the rowdies.

The *Daily Free Press* said, "The whip cracked smartly across the youth's face. Florence's mother announced between smitings that when he, Phil Evans, should again address himself to her daughter in vile terms she would reduce him to the state of a corpse."

Young Evans screamed and sought shelter within the Wells Fargo office. A crowd of small boys, friends and allies of Evans,

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gathered from out of nowhere and set upon Mrs. Molinelli and Dr. Van Zandt with loyal boyish fury.

The entire affair burst across the Wells Fargo threshold with the sound of smashing glass. Major Atlee, the manager, summoned in haste from a rear room, joined the battle with a massive double-entry ledger.

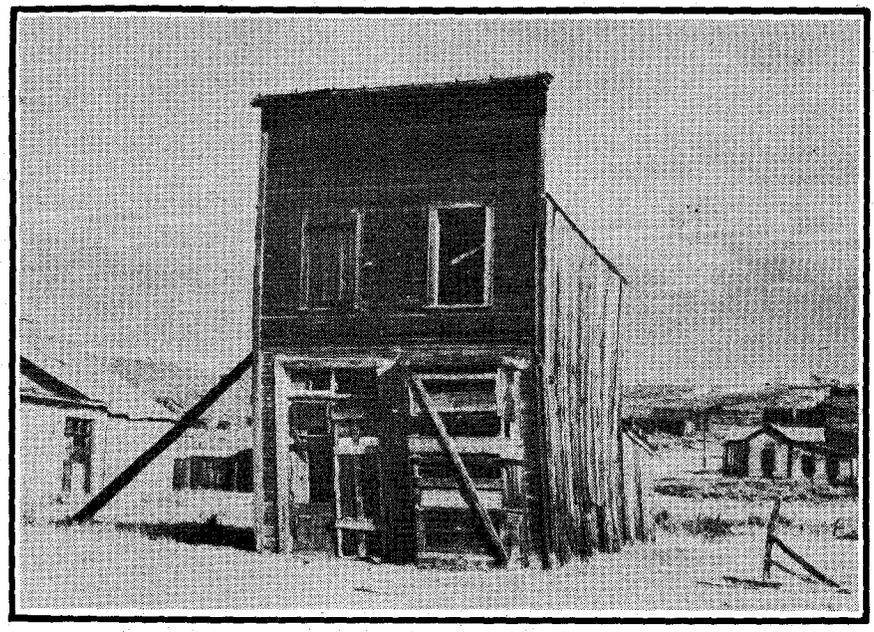
With the aid of the ledger and a slick tactic or two learned from Fighting Joe Hooker during the Civil War, Major Atlee was able to clear the room. The dust settled and the participants in the action went home to bandage themselves.

Bodie thought the matter was ended. But two days later young Evans' mother, pausing at the window of Fred Webber's Harness Store, was seized by the idea, and again there was the sale of a "dog or cat" whip. Mrs. Evans, with her smoldering sense of family wrong, went to the door of Dr. Van Zandt. The doctor was taking a nap on the office sofa and was rudely awakened by her avenging entrance. "The subsequent conversation between the two is of little importance,' reported the *Daily Free Press*. But Dr. Van Zandt later told the reporter, "When a woman puts herself on a man's level she must take the consequences. The whip now occupies a position on my desk next to the skull of a deceased crooked politician."

Most camps disappeared as though they never existed, torn down for lumber to build the next camp, or as with Aurora, for their value in used bricks. Yet in the case of Bodie, one man, James S. Cain, stayed on with his family and slowly acquired just about all the property in town, including the Standard Mine.

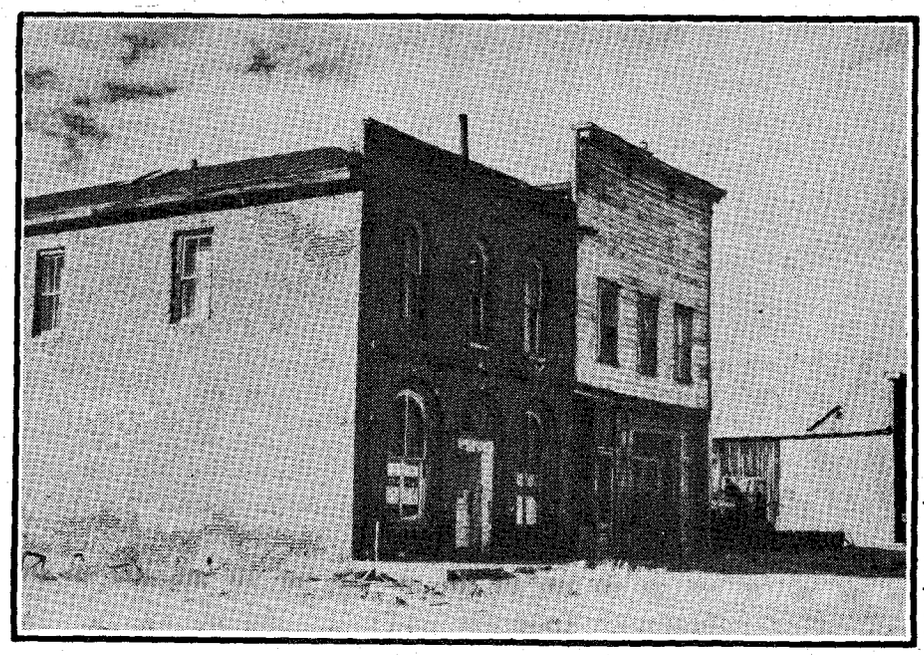
For some reason Bodie was the scene of his personal dream, and he had no interest in searching for another. The cruelest blow to Jim Cain and his Bodie came in 1932 when a fire roared through the literally tinder-dry buildings. They had been driving in the high desert air for fifty years, and the fire destroyed two-thirds of the business section and the entire north end of town.

Three quarters of a century ago the Bad Man from Bodie was one of the familiar sayings of everyday American conversation. He was like Macassar hair oil, the Wild Man from Borneo, the Grangers, and wedding trips to Niagara Falls. He was the subject of sermons with obvious morals in the churches of Boston and Manhattan. He was frequently encountered in the pages of Frank Leslie's *illustrated Weekly*. Bodie was just as remote from firsthand experience and as unavailable to access in the old days as it is today.



Cy Martin photo

Building on Main Street, Bodie in October 1959. Note the board and bat construction and the false front. This building is no longer standing.

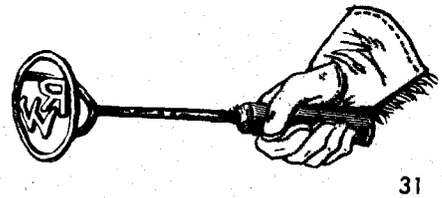


Cy Martin photo

Odd Fellows Hall and the Miners' Union Hall in Bodie. The vacant space at the left is probably the site of the first post office.

Bodie was saved for posterity on September 12, 1965 when the State of California designated the ghost town as a park and historical monument. The bleak and lonely collection of 168 abandoned buildings are still there, and California is attempting to make the buildings safe and prevent looting. The town is maintained in a state of arrested disintegration. Bodie is still way off the beaten track and reached by either of two 15-mile long rough, rock-strewn, dusty, washboard dirt roads.

Neither road is quite bad enough to make you turn back, but at times the endless dirt and dust makes you wish it were. I think the Bad men of Old Bodie would want it this way.



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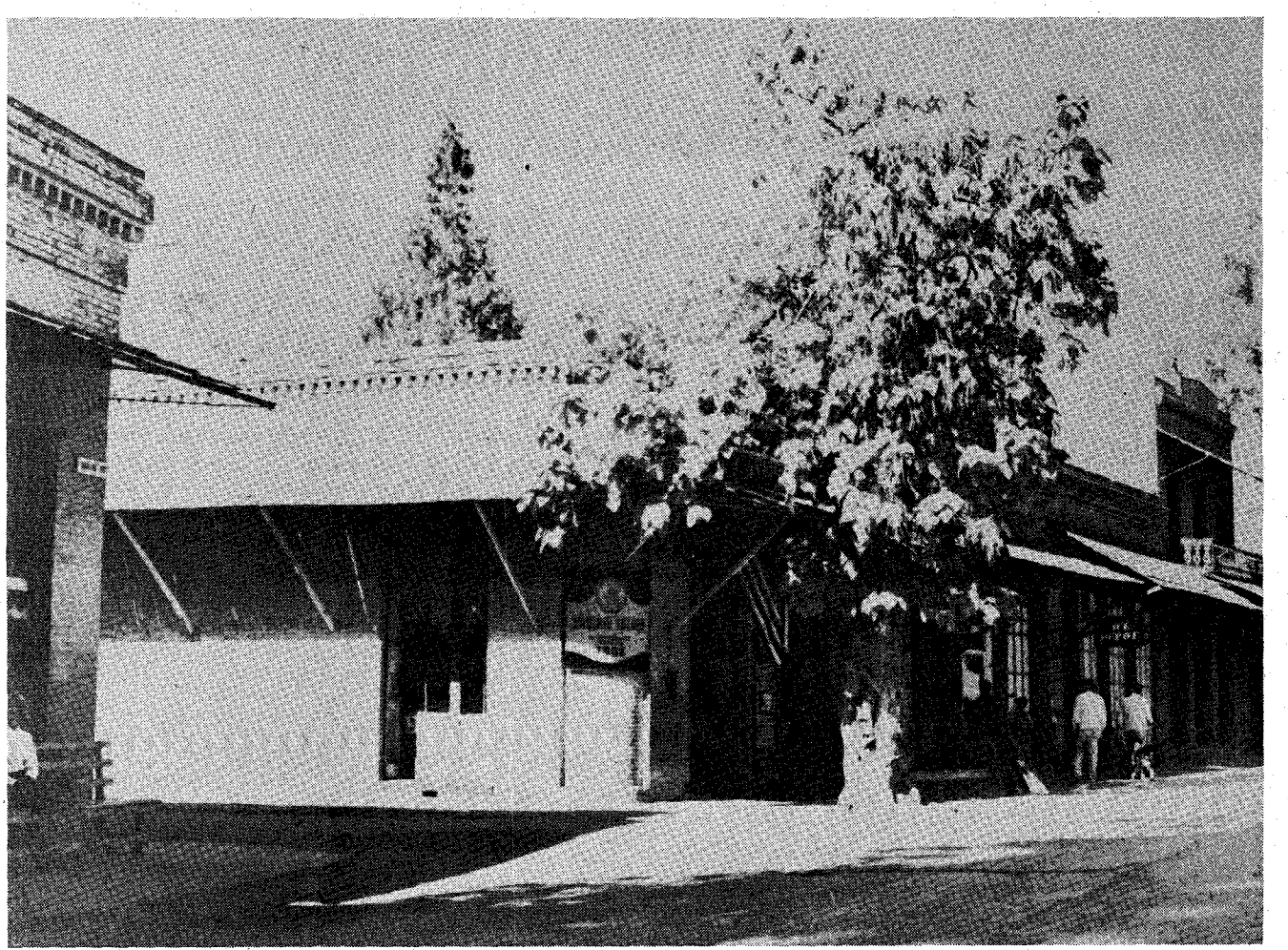
BAREBACK BILLIE—

Whoever nicknamed her Bareback Billie wasn't talking about the horse she rode through the front doors of Columbia, the booming mining town on the Sonora Road in California. It was the lady who was usually bare, not the horse, and she was extremely popular there back in the year of 1859.



The Stage Drivers Retreat, Jack Douglas' saloon in Columbia as it appears today. Bareback Billie rode horses into this saloon often and invited all to have a drink.

Heavily loaded freight outfits, stagecoaches, riders and pedestrians thronged the streets of Columbia day and night. On the Sonora Road the diggings was called the Gem of the Southern Mines. Everybody reaching California seemed to want to try their luck there if only for a few weeks.

Among this motley throng of people from all nations were wanted men and women hiding out from an unhappy past. Among the latter was nineteen - year - old Mary Ann Tyson, a beauteous auburn - headed, slender and curvaceous girl, better known as Bareback Billie.

She appeared there the late summer of 1859 from some place unknown. She departed the same way before the year ended to parts unknown.

The Female Rowdy Of The Mother Lode

By Maurice Kildare

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She was wilder and woolier than most of the rough and hairy miners on the creeks and gulches who threw their dust over Columbia's sordid counters like water.

On an August afternoon all miners lined Main Street with expectant gleams in their eyes. It was about time Bareback Billie should appear again on someone's purloined pony.

Anxiety was stilled when she came down Jackson Street from a livery stable on a temporarily rustled pony, riding bareback at a gallop. She turned into Main Street, heading for Jack Douglas' Saloon and Billiard Parlor which was also called the Stage Drivers Retreat.

She had performed this spectacle before, a usual stunt for her. But this day she amazed even the habitues on Main Street.

Bareback Billie received the cognomen because she rode ponies or small horses into the saloons bareback, using no more than a bridle.

This time, to the astonishment of the thronged sidewalks, she was really bare back. Barefooted, long hair streaming in the wind, she wore no more than a pair of drawers made from washed flour sacks.

Lifting her right hand high in the air she yelled, "Come on, boys! Let's have a drink!" and dashed on for the Stage Drivers Retreat.

Men fought each other to run towards the saloon, blocking Main Street into an impossible morass of human beings and vehicles. But many made it, crowding in behind her as she rode the pony through a tall iron door into the barroom.

The pony, prancing with the excitement, was hard to hold but she managed above the thunderous noise to yell at the bartender, "Set up the drinks for everybody!"

If he didn't hear, at least her meaning was clear for this was what she always did. The drink dispenser started pouring the cheapest red eye in stock that came in large barrels. Its strength had been boosted with chewing tobacco.

Some miner from the roaring crowd handed her a glass of whiskey. After tossing it off, she hurled the empty glass towards the rear over heads of the solidly packed crowd.

The noise was deafening. When she reined the pony, about to leave, men tried shoving themselves out of the way, but several were stepped on and rent the air with violent curses.

As she went out through the door, one miner said to another, "You see that printed word on her drawers? It's Pride. Must be the cloth came from sacks of Pride of the San Joaquin flour."

"You're crazy," retorted the other. "That flour don't come up here. Has to be Pride of Stockton or something like that, where the most mills are."

"Betcha twenty pinches I'm right!"

The argument ended with both pushing their way out, making it up the street to the next saloon into which she had ridden on her rounds.

So difficult was passage through the mass of men that they arrived there as she came out.

"Hey, Billie!" shouted the miner who made the bet. "H'ist your butt so we can see what word is on the other side from Pride."

Before she could reply a voice from the boisterous crowd yelled, "Say, Billie, how come you lost your duds?"

"Washed and hung them up to dry," she answered.

"Let's see the other side of your behind!" the betting miner insisted in a loud shout.

Obligingly she lifted upward on the pony's back. The flour sack panel on the left thigh read plainly, "Golden Wheat." Then she barged into the crowd regardless of those in the way.

"See, I told you them flour sacks came from Stockton!" the miner taking the bet shouted loudly to be heard.

"It didn't say nothing about Stockton," the bettor declared hotly. "Them flour sacks brought it up here from the San Joaquin Valley where the most wheat is raised."

"Don't call me a liar!"

Fighting words.

The Wells Fargo express office at Columbia as it looks today. Back in the 1850's it was a beehive of activity when stagecoaches were robbed almost weekly. Detectives got on the robber's trail but he escaped leaving town with Bareback Billie.

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A California miner of the 1850's using a rocker to gather gold dust.

The bettor drew his holstered gun as did the other miner. Two shots were fired before the closely packed street crowd could smash themselves out of the way. Fortunately for them there was no stray bullet. No bystander stopped one. The miners killed each other.

Bareback Billie went down Jackson Street and was putting the pony inside the barn lot when the owner appeared.

"Borrowing my stock again, Billie?" he asked indulgently. No matter what she did, he regarded her fondly.

"This pony is the best one I have ever ridden," she told him with an engaging smile.

Perplexedly regarding her naked torso a moment, he scratched an ear. "Ain't you got no decent clothes?"

"Sure, and I am going to get into them and some shoes!"

She walked away from the livery stable on Jackson Street into the hills. The cabin, which few people knew that she camped in, huddled in a draw. Entering, she took off the flour sack drawers and donned regular clothing with ribbed stockings and shoes.

Hardly had she finished when a rap sounded on the shaky door and then Armer Snowden entered. He was a handsome, tall man dressed in a black suit and boiled white shirt. His clean shaven face was starched — paper pale as though he occasionally used rice powder. A tinhorn gambler, his favorite game was draw poker. Because of marked cards it was a miracle if he ever lost.

He stood scowling while regarding Bareback Billie.

"Quite a spectacle you put on downtown awhile ago," he began.

"So what?"

"Billie, you have got to cut out your childish pranks. That is all they are. If you were a cheap trollop of a girl from the adobe houses it would be different. No one would pay any attention to you. Now, let this be the last time you pull the riding stunt."

"Since when did you get to be my boss?"

"Well, uh, the bartenders and saloon men are beginning to object to such carrying — on."

"To hell with them! They sell many times as much of their rot gut whiskey after I ride into their joints and they know it. Why should they yell?"

Changing tactics he said, "Billie, you live here alone. It is dangerous and you should have a man around."

"Especially you to protect me, huh?" she asked sarcastically.

"I didn't say anything about shacking up!" he protested.

"When I decide to den up with some damned man I'll let you know. But don't hold your breath. Now, get gone from here!"

Down on Main Street the afternoon stage rolled in somewhat late. The driver unloaded ten passengers at the Columbia Hotel. Then at the Wells Fargo and Company Express office he paused long enough to inform the agent that the iron strong box had been lost to a lone bandit. Going on to the stage barn, he put the teams away and went back uptown to the Stage Drivers Retreat.

A dozen of his own calling were there. First he had a drink to settle his shattered nerves. While waiting for the second he turned to the other whips.

"Boys, a lone crum took me at the point of rocks not three miles from Columbia," he divulged. "He just lifted up on one of them high rocks after I slowed on the slope climb. He ordered me to throw off the box. This feller was masked but below the bandana edges, looked like his face was covered with powder."

The others were immensely interested, for their lives might depend on their knowledge of the robber's modus operandi. The stage driver could tell them no more than what happened. Before he finished, a county law officer and a special agent of Wells Fargo appeared. The story had to be told all over again with questions interrupting the narrative.

"I'll take a posse and go have a look," the county officer said and departed with the Wells Fargo agent from San Francisco.

Bareback Billie did not appear again on Main Street until the middle of September. Whether or not she had gone elsewhere on a visit during the meantime no one knew. But she wasn't in the cabin.

A Sacramento politician running for some office appeared in Columbia to make a series of speeches on a Sunday. The Fallon House was too small to accommodate the crowd. A stand was erected before it in the street, decorated with many yards of

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bright colored bunting. A brass band of sorts blared out a little music during intermissions.

Every time the pompous speaker paused, the crowd of miners yelled loudly and fired a few guns into the sky overhead. Most of them had not even heard his oration. The politican must have imagined himself to be the world's best orator because of this stupendous and explosive reception from drunken miners.

About four o'clock in the afternoon Bareback Billie sauntered casually to the far edge of the crowd overflowing into Main Street from the Fallon House. After listening for some time to the outlandish speech, she grew impatient and wandered down to the creek.

Standing tied to a thorny tree was a pony wearing a fancy saddle and trappings, martingale, tapaderos and bridle ornamented with engraved silver conchas. Only the pony interested her, so she unhooked the martingale, unbuckled the cinches to release the saddle and blanket and let them drop off to the ground.

"Billie!" a voice called to her. "You stealing another horse to ride?"

When she turned sideways the speaker was among three miners who had approached quietly.

"Does this horse belong to one of you?"

"Naw. Some greaser owns it. Couldn't you tell by the fancy trimmings on the gear?"

"Greaser!" A Spanish voice echoed the miner. All turned quickly to see a short statured Mexican rising out of the shaded brush where he had been sleeping.

"Okay," the miner replied. "You ain't a greaser, if you insist. Billie was about to swipe your horse."

Turning to her the Mexican said, "I am Juan Jose Mendoza. If you desire to ride my caballo, I would be honored, Mees Beele!" With that said he bowed low, doffing an embroidered high peaked sombrero.

"Thank you, Mr. Mendoza."

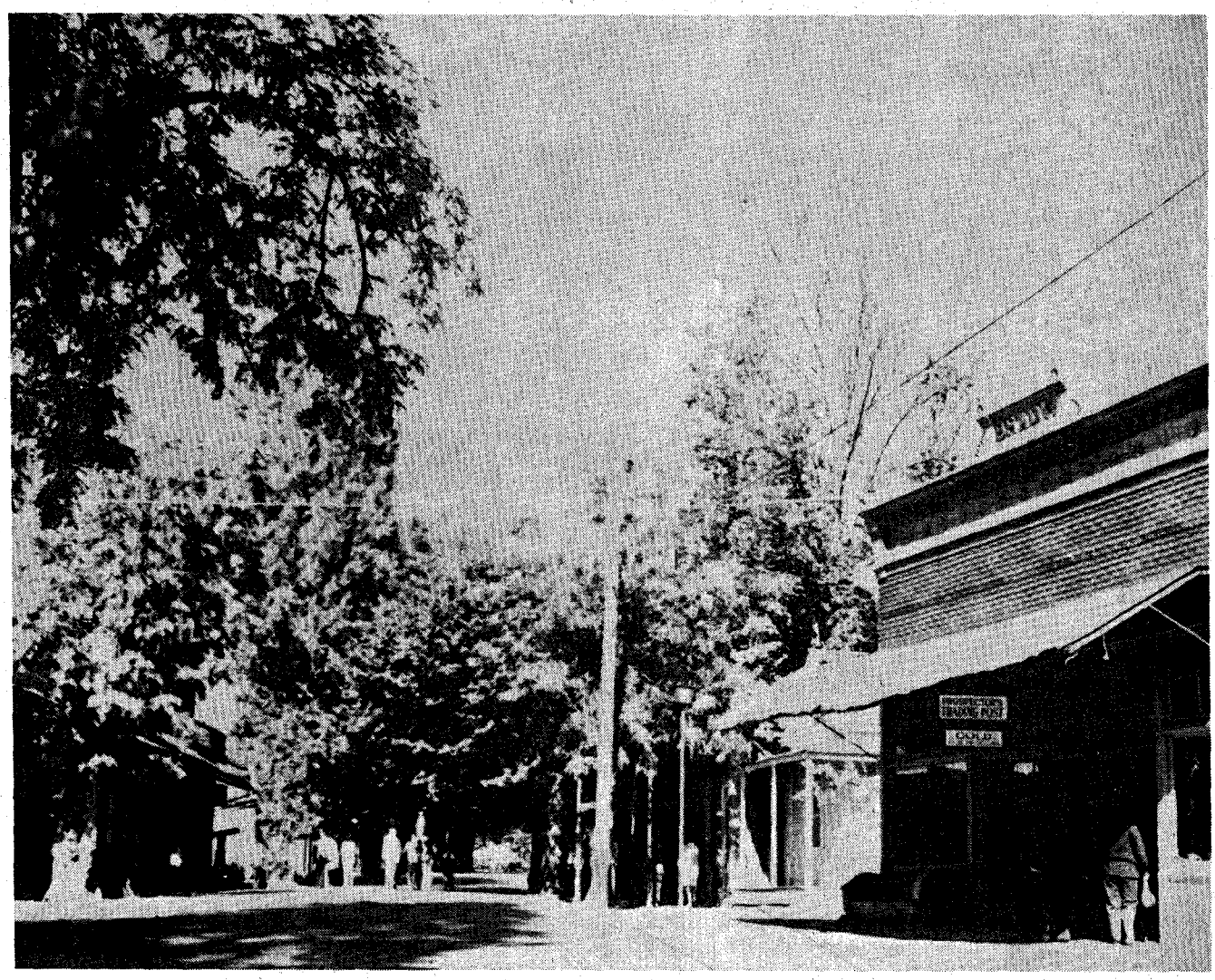
"The pleasure is all mine, I assure you." Moving forward with lithe grace he bent a knee from which Bareback Billie mounted.

"She's liable to steal your horse, Mendoza!" the speaking miner guffawed. "We hang horse thieves in these diggings!"

"The senor who touches a hair of Mees Beele's head will have to deal with me!" So saying, his right hand made a slash at the ornate sash around his waist and came up with a double edged blade ten inches long. The dangerous weapon shone silvery in the sunlight.

The miners stared aghast, realizing that Mendoza was not making an idle threat.

The shooting and yelling having ended, once more the politician from Sacramento was again shouting himself hoarse in extravagant eloquence. Bareback Billie passed through the edge of the crowd bulging over into lower Main Street. Poke bonnet swung to the strings behind her neck and the dress was up waist high of necessity, exposing white thighs.



Columbia's present day Main Street is a contrast to the wild and woolly days of the 1850's when throngs of miners frequented the thirty-odd saloons along the thoroughfare.

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One hand raised in the air she screamed, "It's time to likker, boys!"

Immediately the crowd of miners screamed as one, "Billie!" and turned en masse away from the speakers stand.

The politician shouted in anger, "Somebody get that harridan out of here!"

Probably few heard him, for packed together like sardines in a can, the mass of humanity swerved off behind Bareback Billie. She rode into the first bar, shouting her usual salutation to the bartender.

Fortunately for a rider, most of the doors in Columbia, while narrow, were tall. Of iron, they had been shipped around the Horn from England to the California gold fields. Otherwise she couldn't have ridden into any building.

After making the first two on Main Street, she escaped when they were filled. The next happened to be one of canvas, poles and mine lagging lumber. No door except a wide open entrance graced it. The pony went inside only when kicked in the ribs. It's plank bar filled behind her. While the miners were drinking up and buying more whiskey than was good for them, she rode out the back, tearing apart the canvas about a low door.

As she had started doing on first reaching Columbia, she made the entire street. A little after sundown, when the old ships reflector hurricane whale oil lanterns were lighted, she swung away from the boisterous scene of activity.

When she returned to where the pony was taken, Mendoza was there. Dismounting, she thanked him.

Walking to the cabin, she cooked a meal by candlelight and ate. Afterwards she pulled an unbleached muslin curtain from one corner of the flat-roofed cabin, exposing a number of brightly colored and expensive evening gowns. Somewhere, sometime she and her family had been wealthy. Selecting a rose colored, sleeveless one, she donned it.

Going to the flimsy door, she opened it for cooling night air. Standing before the cabin in the bright starlight were five hurly-burly miners. Some were so drunk they had to hold onto each other.

"Billie!" one of them cried. "We done come to see you."

Moving backward quickly, she grabbed a revolver, holding it concealed behind her hips.

"I do not receive visitors," she told the miners coldly, who had advanced all the way to the door. "If you boys think I am one of those girls downtown, you have made a serious mistake."

"Oh come on, that purty dress and all? Can you sing?"

"I have told you. No visitors are welcome. Please leave."

Two of them staggered all the way to the wall and began talking, their thick tongued words were not understandable.

"I told you to leave!"

From around the far cabin end appeared Mendoza, a serape hanging loose over his left shoulder.

"Americanos!" he began in an authoritative voice. "Mees Beele has asked you to leave. You will vamoose, no?"

"Listen to the damned greaser!" one miner began.

Mendoza's right hand came into the starlight holding a long barreled, horn-handled revolver.

"Vamoose!"

Addled, the miners swung around and started away. Two fell down, were helped onto their feet and all headed for Jackson Street.

His white teeth flashing in the starlight Mendoza said, "Buenas noches, senorita!"

"Wait," she called, "how do you happen to be here?"

"I sleep in the hills. Do you have no family here?"

"No. Thank you for chasing those drunk miners."

"You need protection. That is why I asked about a family."

"I have all the necessary protection needed." she replied, and brought the revolver into view.

"Ah," he breathed deep. "But you should have a chain on the door fastened on the inside. Tomorrow I will see to it."

Good as his word, the next morning Mendoza put a chain through holes in the main post of the door. It could be fastened on the inside by slipping an iron bolt through two links.

That same afternoon another stage coming in from Sonora was robbed of the express box. The guard was wounded. That created a little excitement but soon vanished. Men were either busy carousing in wicked Columbia or digging for gold in the gulches.

That night Snowden came rampaging to her cabin. He found the door chained. Opening it she stood on the threshold, not inviting him inside.

He stormed, "I hear you're letting a greaser make up to you!"

"No man makes up to me. If you mean Mendoza, he happened along in time to aide me."

"I didn't hear that part, only that he's been here. Don't you realize that dandified Mex is surely an outlaw? Probably he's one of the old Joaquin Murieta gang."

"To me he is a gentleman and he doesn't come around bothering me."

Once more he ranted about Bareback Billie needing a man's protection. They argued some before he departed in a huff. If she realized that the gambler was wildly in love with her, she gave no sign.

For the next ten days she remained off Main Street. Inquiries were made concerning her. Finally, Jack Douglas went to the livery barn, received directions and reached the single-room cabin.

He was so polite, doffing his hat, that she asked him in.

"Miss Billie," he began, "the boys have missed you. There's no excitement downtown."

"That doesn't sound right. The stage has been robbed for the third time this month. Last week there were three fatal shootings and a number wounded in knife fights. No excitement?" She laughed brittlely.

"That ain't pleasurable excitement, Miss Billie. Them kind of scrapes happen all the time. It would be a pleasure for you to ride into my place again."

"I have been told the saloon owners are mad enough to banish me from these diggings."

"Pshaw, now, maybe a couple. But not me and all the others running the elite places."

Before leaving, he repeated his invitation.

The following afternoon, about the time the miners flocked into town, Bareback Billie went to the Jackson Street livery stable wearing a good colored, sleeveless evening gown.

The owner met her in front. "Bet you want to borrow a horse? I'll bring out the same one you rode before."

When he did and she raised her skirts to mount, he objected. "Miss Billie, you better go back to your cabin and put on something else. You'll ruin that purty dress."

"Well, so I could," she admitted. Dropping the bridle reins she pulled the gown up over her shoulders and handed it to him. There were no under-garments beneath it except knee length drawers.

Mounting the pony, she entered Main Street at a gallop, yelling her customary greeting. The first place she swung into was the stage Drivers Retreat. Miners, howling like wolves rushed there, all trying to get inside

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Britton & Rey Lithograph, Smithsonian Institution.

A typical saloon in the California mother lode gold fields.

first.

Across the street watching were three of the more notorious demimonde.

Said one, "If something isn't done about that square, she's going to give us all a bad reputation."

Of the thirty-odd saloons in Columbia she made most of them that afternoon. Tiring at sundown, she returned the pony to the livery stable and redressed.

That afternoon still another stagecoach was robbed three miles from Columbia where the first one had been. This time the shotgun guard was killed. The driver and three passengers were wounded by a tall, lone, masked bandit.

Wells Fargo and Company had quietly moved in detectives from San Francisco. They already had a dozen subjects under surveillance. One was Snowden, but on that afternoon he was believed to be in Sonora. Nevertheless he was a prime suspect, for he couldn't be accounted for.

Following this robbery, a quiet group of determined men organized to be ready for action against the robbers. Despite the secrecy surrounding them, within hours twenty suspects disappeared. One of them was Snowden.

For two weeks Bareback Billie wondered what happened to him. Maybe he was the lone bandit as rumor whispered.

Abruptly she began making her pony rides two or three times each week. Horse owners took the prank as a joke and were very lenient about her predilection.

Now she drank heavily and created so many disturbances on her bareback rides that even Douglas suggested that she dispense with her pranks for awhile. The situation neared a climax when one November night a continued knocking on the chained door aroused her.

Going there with the gun in hand she asked, "Who's there?"

"It's Snowden and let me in fast!"

When she did so, he talked in a rush. "I've got a saddled horse for you. Pack your duds and come with me!"

"So you are one of the robbers?"

"Don't ask questions. Whether I am or not they suspect me, and I am liable to be picked up. Let's go now."

"Why should I?"

He drew a deep breath. "Because I love you, that's why. I've got money, and as soon as we get away from the gold fields we can be married."

"Why didn't you say so before?"

Within minutes Bareback Billie packed what she wanted to take along. He tied the sacks and a small valise on the horses. Mounting in the dark night they disappeared from Columbia.

When she failed to show up on Main Street after a week, the cabin was looked into and found empty.

The saloon owners and their bartenders breathed great sighs of relief. Later her antics had become just too much to countenance.

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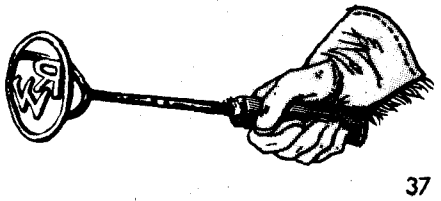

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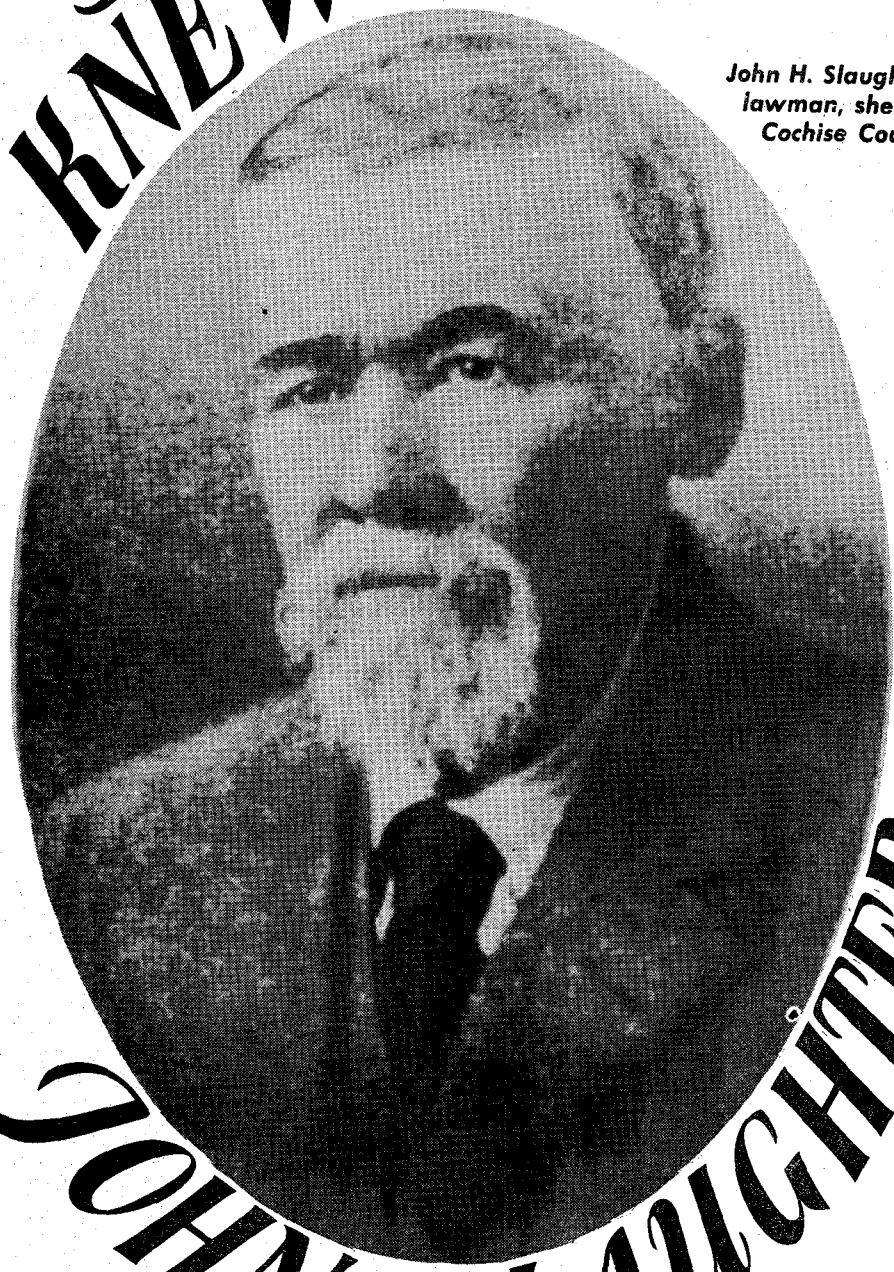
I KNEW JOHN SLAUGHTER



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John H. Slaughter, lawman, sheriff of Cochise County, Arizona.

The most feared lawman of Tombstone told Judge Baird how it really was and the readers of Real West finally learned the truth about Wyatt Earp and the notorious Clanton Gang. None of the gunslingers willingly tangled with this quiet peace officer.

By Judge Clayton R. Baird
As told to Harold Preece

The raw era that he symbolized has become history. The tamed town with the grim name is living proof of how a forceful man can shape an epoch.

Today awed tourists walk along Toughnut Street in Tombstone where he carved some fitting epitaphs. Except that he was a greater and better figure of the West than swaggering hell raisers like Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday who never got up enough nerve to mess with him.

His name—John Slaughter.

I am a Texas judge and one of that fearless lawman's last surviving friends. I can recall breaking bread with him and riding saddle to saddle with him for journeys across his vast San Bernardino ranch there on the turbulent Texas-Mexican border. Though he was a very modest person, I did hear from his own lips some recollections of what he had done to clean up Arizona Territory so that timorous congressmen would vote for its admission into the Union. Other details in this strictly factual account were researched and collated by a native Western writer, Harold Preece, who for years has published definitive historical pieces in this magazine.

Harold and I talked mainly about John Slaughter after our first encounter on a New York street to recognize each other intuitively as Texans off their home range. At

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Harold's request, I have let my memories of that superb Texas-Arizona lawman keep growing till we could have something that would inform and please the readers of REAL WEST.

A Louisianan by birth, John Horton Slaughter had been a celebrated Texas Ranger before he settled in Arizona as a major cattle grower during 1874. I can remember as clearly as yesterday my first meeting with him.

A brash West-struck, wandering kid, age 21, I was then. After leaving Tennessee, my birthplace, I had kept rambling around the states and territories that had given us so many enduring legends. At one time in California I was a piano player or "professor" working saloons and variety theaters.

Finally, during 1917, I had landed at Douglas, Arizona, to find a job as a cashier in a restaurant located within a stone's throw of municipal police headquarters. A great many officers from various agencies would be among the customers. I got to know many of them including the great railroad detective, Jeff Milton, and Billy Breckenridge, ex-deputy of Tombstone who had played a brave part in running the Earp gang out of Arizona.

Everywhere I heard talk of John Slaughter who, people said, had been the finest lawman of them all. In my youthful imagination, I figured he must be elven feet tall with a pair of six-shooters for hands.

I had been at the restaurant for several months when, on a Saturday afternoon around 3:30 p.m., a short-statured old man entered, removed his Stetson, and asked the waiter to bring him an order of eggs.

Nothing set him off from any of the average people who patronized this border area cafe. From my place at the cash register I noticed that he was neatly dressed and very quiet in his manner. I guessed that this peaceful looking elderly gentleman was a retired rancher or business man; perhaps, too, a major stockholder of Arizona's largest industry, the Phelps-Dodge Copper Company, based right here in Douglas.

The customer finished his meal then walked up to the register to pay, handing me a $20 bill and a tab for eighty-five cents. Since my cash was running low, I asked:

"Do you have any smaller change, sir?"

"Let me see." He dug around in his pockets, came up with a one dollar bill then said:

"I am about out of any kind of money, been loading cattle all day and didn't get to the bank."

From the register I handed him a dime and a nickel in change. At that minute, I reckoned that he wasn't any kind of colossus out here in this cattle and copper rich country. But maybe just some played out ancient cowboy that the boss trusted on business matters.

Baird family album

Clayton R. Baird, a judge on the Texas border, narrator of this account, one of John Slaughter's last surviving friends.

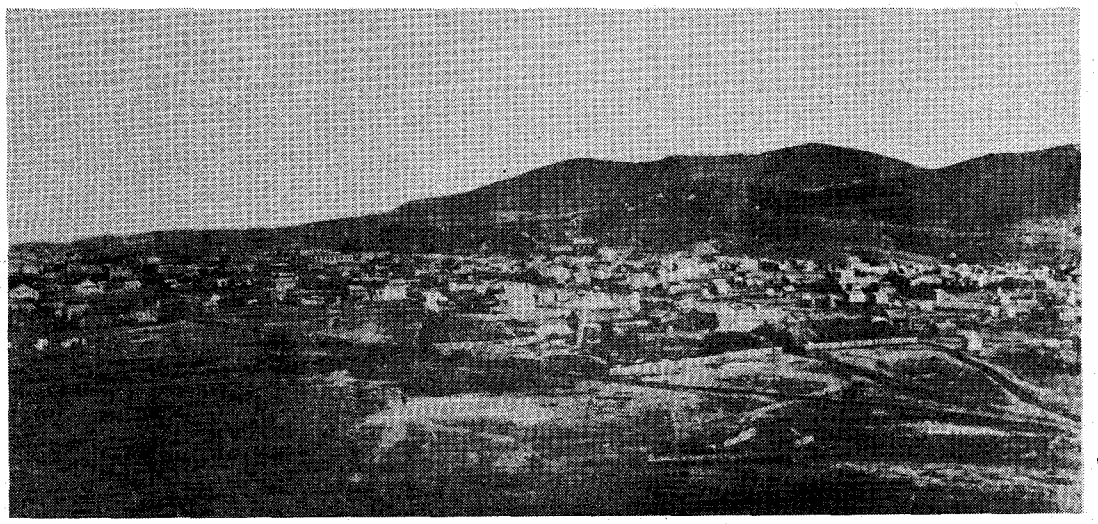
He did look kind of lonesome. And my folks back in the South had taught me to be attentive toward old people. So I wanted to be as polite to this gray-headed stranger as I would have been to my own grandpa.

"Are you working for a rancher?" I inquired.

"Not exactly," he replied in that Texas-sounding drawl you heard all over Arizona. "I was just leading a few of my own cattle." Then he extended his hand: "The name is Slaughter, John Slaughter."

Something must have clicked in my kid mind. Something that I guessed was true yet I just couldn't quite believe.

Was this little old man, weighing just about 135 pounds, *the* John Slaughter: the man who had first identified Marshal Earp's comrade-at-arms, Doc Holliday, as a fleeing bank robber; who had warned Arizona's most efficient gang of wideloopers, the Clantons, to stay off his land and away from his herds with that trigger tribe heeding words said just once; who had given Tombstone's last famous outlaws 24 hours notices to hit the road and buried those who didn't.



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View of Tombstone, Arizona, 1880

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Baird family album

D.N. Baird and Clayton Baird as they looked while living in Arizona in 1915.

Yet this dignified, soft-spoken oldster had neither the bearing, the look nor the tell-tale movements of a gunslinger, not even one who had slain for the law. Maybe he could be a second John Slaughter of whom I had heard: a prominent Texas-New Mexico rancher. So trying to be casual. I asked:

"Are you the Mr. Slaughter who used to be sheriff?"

Still in that mild tone he answered: "Yes, I was sheriff of Cochise County for awhile."

My startled eyes were looking at an age of history.

That John Slaughter should eventually choose me as one of his friends seems, in retrospect, one of the great, outstanding honors of my life. Half a century later, I wonder what caused him, one of Arizona's founders and richest men, to extend himself to an obscure, wandering boy scraping along on restaurant wages.

His acquaintance with my brother, D. N. Baird, might have had something to do with it. D. N., also fresh out of Tennessee, was one of the American troopers patrolling the border area embracing Slaughter's San Bernardino ranch at the time of the Pancho Villa revolution in Mexico. Slaughter had much respect for those boys who had been national guardsmen in various Southern and Southwestern states till their units had been incorporated into the regular army.

His hospitality was boundless toward them. Mrs. Slaughter was always fussing around fixing special delicacies for them to eat and sending it over by her husband's own private force of armed, combat trained Mexican vaqueros. Any man wearing his country's uniform was always welcome at the luxurious, pleasantly informal Slaughter home, 17 miles east of Douglas and lying just a few whoops and hollers from the Mexican line. Any trooper was welcome to stay as long as military orders permitted and to eat all that he could hold.

I was no soldier. Yet from the time that I hit the West, I found myself moving within the orbit of its surviving pioneers. Particularly so among its pioneer lawmen who, in retrospect, were just about the finest men I have ever known.

I think that John Slaughter may have appreciated my deep interest in the West where history lives ever on the lips of the people. He may have liked also the tactful way in which I put questions about a past still so recent within the memories of other Westerners still living. Plus the fact that I didn't grill him about his own very major role, though I knew that he had also helped frame Arizona's constitution before it had been admitted as a state in 1912, just five years before. Nor did I quiz him about his own far-flung business interests which included a directorship in the historic Bank of Douglas, still in operation at the time of this account.

For unlike squalid old badge wearers such as John Selman and Wild Bill Hickok, John Slaughter was basically a very reserved sort of man. Nobody who wished to keep on calling terms with him overstepped that boundary I always felt between ordinary casual friendliness and egregious over-familiarity. Years before, I would learn, a breezy stranger, trading on his Southern accent, had twice dared address him as "Tex."

"My name is Slaughter, sir. If you ever have reason to greet me again, just remember the name is Slaughter."

I can remember that he always addressed me formally as Mr. Baird and never as Clayton. That rule of decorum was never relaxed during the numerous times when I was his house guest. In his manners he was still the Southern squire of a classic mold, affable, welcoming anybody who knocked at his door, yet leaving the distinct impression that hospitality did not invite a buddy-buddy sort of intimacy.

Correspondingly I learned little of the Slaughter epic from the tacit lips of the man who had shaped it. Occasionally, when he would ask me to join him on a ride, he might point toward some distant arroyo and remark quietly:

"Over there is where the Clanton boys and their pardners, the McLowerys, bunched stolen cattle before running them into Mexico."

Or:

"Across that mountain Jack Taylor's train robbing gang used to make camp."

Then silence would become eloquent. Never one word of some sequels that are unforgettable episodes of Arizona's touch-and-go struggle for law and order.

Of how on October 25th, 1881, a strutting Earp-Holliday posse had penned the Clanton-McLowery gang inside the OK Corral at Tombstone then shot them down like so many hogs. Two bands of trigger thugs clashing in that celebrated shootout. One left to keep killing.

Or of how John Slaughter, during his last year as sheriff, had personally led the posse which tracked down the five-man Taylor gang happily robbing trains in Mexico then laying low

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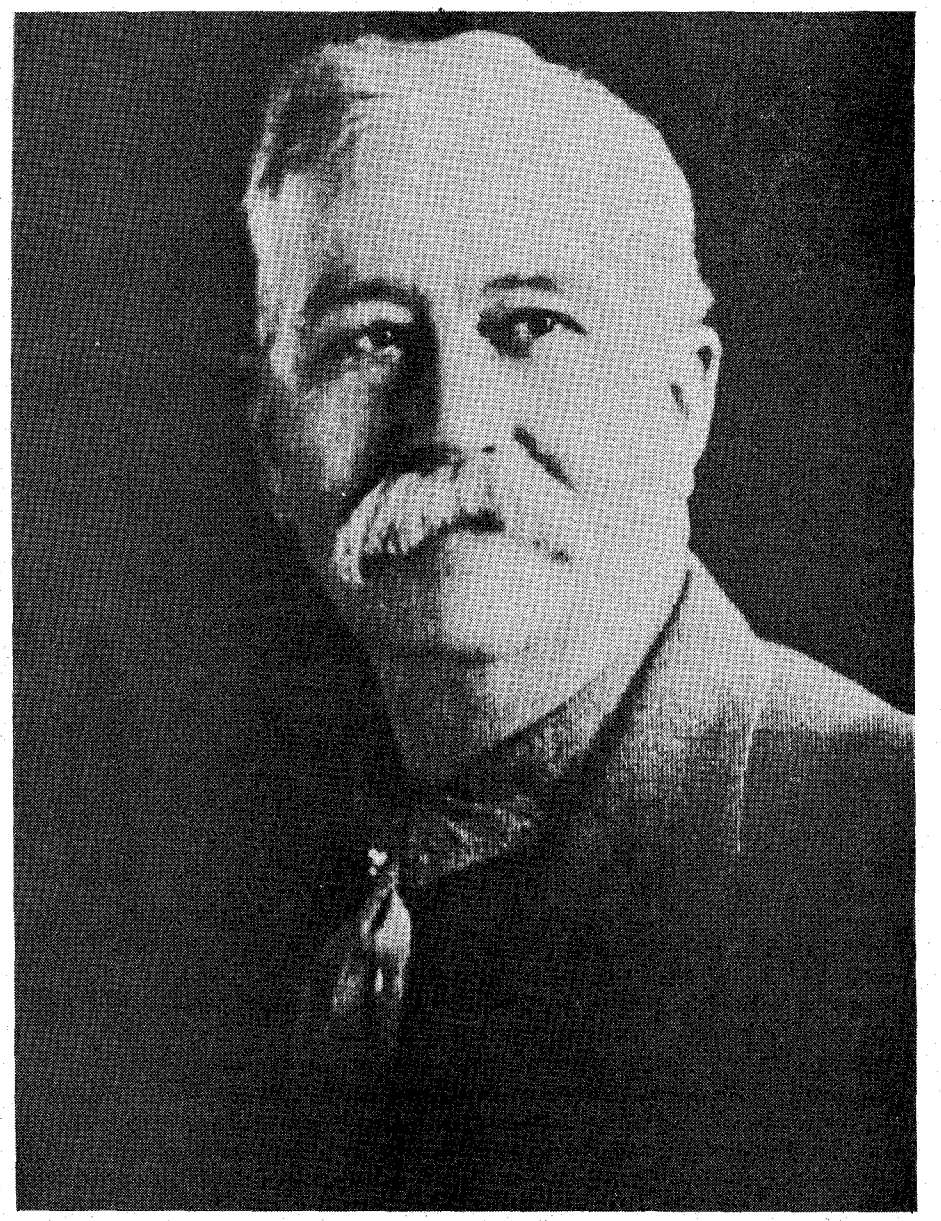

Jeff D. Milton, famous railroad detective and close friend of John Slaughter whom Clayton Baird met at Slaughter's San Bernardino Ranch. Milton was U.S. Customs inspector at Tombstone, coping with border smugglers when Slaughter was elected sheriff in 1886.

in the Whetstone Mountains on the American side. A profitable, reasonably safe business it had been for the slippery Mr. Taylor and his four Mexican cohorts till Sheriff Slaughter, at the request of Mexico's border police, had decided to close down the enterprise.

Taylor had already been arrested while buying a three dollar hat in Nogales along with a German to whom he had supposedly taught the art of engine boarding. As a humiliating follow-up the trapped pair had been sentenced to life imprisonment in one of Mexico's highly unpleasant and antiquated penitentiaries. American train robbers like the Daltons and Bill Doolin would rest easier in comfortable cemeteries.

From Jeff Milton, usually at those ranch gatherings, I heard the sequel to that punched saga of Jack Taylor's bandit mob. By Milton's words, quoted from memory.

"I recollect the whole thing," that dogged old lawman told me. "I was U.S. customs inspector at Tombstone where John Slaughter was sheriff. Four of Taylor's boys were still running loose after that rain holdup in the Mexican state of Sonora. Their handles were Geronimo Miranda, Manuel Robles, Nieves Deron and one John never knew except as Fred, Federico in Spanish. Mean scoundrels, the whole bunch was wanted by the Mexican Rurales and by half the sheriffs in Arizona.

"But because they had kinfolks around Tombstone they had no more sense than to hide there, right under the nose of the law which was John Slaughter."

By Jeff Milton's same account:

Slaughter heard that the quartet were in town hiding out at the home of a Mexican woman said to be Flora Cardenas. She was feeding and bedding them when they slipped in at night from days of furtive "scouting" in the nearby Whetstone Mountains. For three successive evenings Slaughter and a party of deputies "staked out" the adobe hovel of Mrs. Cardenas.

But somebody, Slaughter never knew who, tipped off the fugitives. Mrs. Cardenas, when questioned, denied everything in an indignant brimstone patois of English and Spanish. The grim sheriff ordered the lady kept under surveillance. Then he resumed the search through his network of Spanish-speaking informants.

The four vanished gunmen were reported as "laying up" at Clifton then at Wilcox. Slaughter's deputies could find them in neither place. The trail grew cold. But that lawman, trained in the Texas Rangers, found a way of warming it up.

He learned that Manuel Robles' brother, Guadalupe, sold firewood in a little town known, perhaps appropriately, as Contention. Guadalupe's source of supply was a woodcamp that he operated in a canyon of the Whetstones. He slept at the camp but shopped a general store in the small mining settlement. An informant reported that Guadalupe, known to live alone, had started buying more groceries than any one man could eat within a reasonable time.

During a blue-gold Arizona dawn, a posse led by Slaughter surrounded the camp. Three men lay sleeping on blankets under the waning stars. Slaughter recognized them as Nieves Deron and Manuel Robles, engine boarders, and Guadalupe Robles, guilty of nothing thus far except harboring fugitives, with one happening to be his brother.

"To your feet!" Slaughter thundered. "Get up, with your hands up!"

The trio awoke shooting.

Slaughter's first bullet disposed of Guadalupe Robles, the woodcutter. Manuel Robles and Deron then fled toward a heap of boulders, bullets from the sheriff's .45 nicking at their clothes, gunsmoke singeing their hair. Deron turned in desperation when the pair reached the boulders. Half crouching behind one of the big rocks, he fired three times from a

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swift action Colt .45.

One bullet grazed Slaughter's right ear. A dribble of blood ran down his cheek. Two shots crashed into a giant cactus slaying a pair of lizards darting around its trunk. Remaining on his feet, the sheriff pulled a trigger.

Nieves Deron fell mortally wounded. Manuel Robles, now short on valor, emerged from behind a boulder and sprinted off like a terrified jackrabbit.

Slaughter's belching gun knocked him into the dust. But bleeding and cursing Robles bounded back to his feet. He ran four yards when a second shot from that spewing barrel hit him in the left arm. Once more the desperado fell. Again he rose and dove into a thicket, escaping as the sheriff's third bullet missed him by a fraction of an inch.

The notorious Taylor gang had been shattered. Jack Taylor and his German segundo, Fritz somebody or other, were sweating out life terms in a foreign prison. Guadalupe Robles was dead. Nieves Deron was dying. Before he gasped out his last breath, he confessed to Sheriff Slaughter that he had slain the engineer of the robbed train in Sonora.

Three of Jack Taylor's "bloody boys" were still at large: Geronimo Miranda, absent during that whizzing battle in the canyon; Federico or "Fred", also not around to match marksmanship with Arizona's precise deadly sheriff; and the wounded Manuel Robles.

"But not loose for long," commented Jeff Milton on that hazy afternoon when he told me the story. For by Milton's account, substantiated in Arizona's state archives, Robles and Miranda were killed a few months later by Mexican rurales (saddled policemen) in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico.

Federico would be finally captured with an accomplice of uncertain name by that same body of Mexican officers. But not before they had slain Deputy Sheriff Cesario Lucero in a sudden ambush actually meant for John Slaughter.

Cesario Lucero, frank, fearless, impeccably honest, was one of Slaughter's two outstanding deputies. Burt Alvord, conniving, more brazen than brave, finally himself turning road agent was the other.

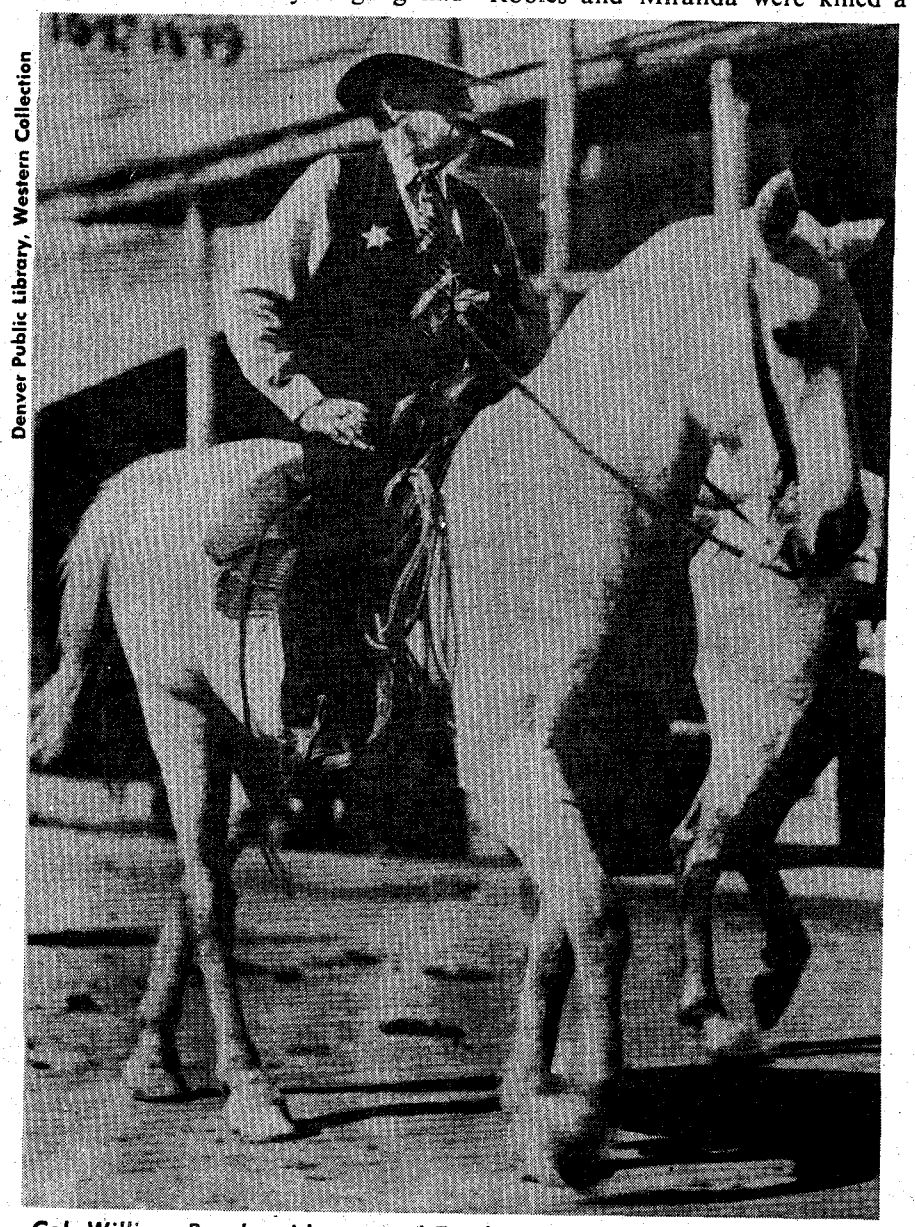
I never heard Slaughter actually speak of Lucero. But old lawmen told me that he had given his murdered deputy's family much financial assistance. Yet if anything could crack John Slaughter's habitual reserve it was mention of Alvord's name in any connection.

Then the cigar usually in his mouth would shake and quiver in a shower of sparks and ashes. His hands would flex angrily as if they were gripping a pair of guns. Those black eyes would flare like erupting volcanoes. Then he would proceed to damn that renegade ex-lawman from hell to kingdom come and back.

Looking back, one can feel that Slaughter's one major mistake as a sheriff was hiring Burt Alvord for chief deputy. When the rich rancher took office in 1887, Alvord was a town character of irregular occupation, yet usually having money in his pocket. He was on cordial terms with everybody from suspected outlaws to one of the San Bernardino's cowboys, Billie Hildreth.

Alvord had died, presumably as a fugitive in Panama, when I knew Slaughter. He had been a friend of a Slaughter cowboy, Billie Hildreth, said to have been an occasional lawman. This may have figured in Alvord's becoming an officer. Common consenus of opinion I heard was that the new sheriff hoped that his right hand would be a constant source of information on the doings of the tough crowd.

Yet Alvord would later team up with the most dangerous of the border bandits, Augustine Chacon, after having first met the latter when he had ridden into Tombstone carrying a gun for Slaughter, only to find himself ignobly pulling bridle leather for Mexico. After turning outlaw Alvord, in another turn of his treacherous self, would betray Chacon, who had given him refuge, to Captain Burton Mossman of the



Denver Public Library, Western Collection

Col. William Breakenridge, noted Tombstone lawman was one of John Slaughter's closest friends and told Clayton Baird much about the latter's epic career as sheriff of tough Cochise County, Arizona.

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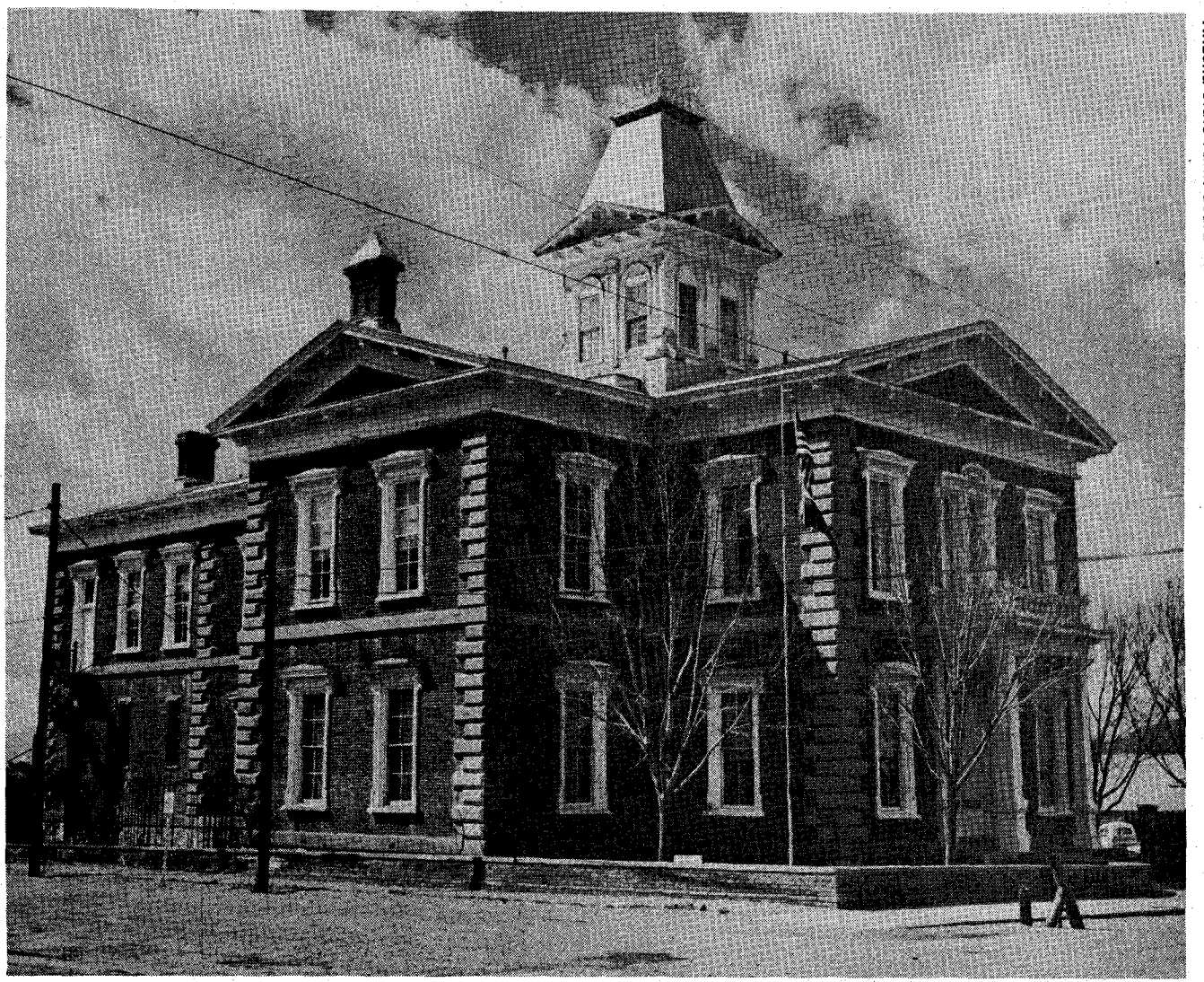

Arizona State Parks Board

Cochise County Courthouse where Slaughter had his office as sheriff.

Arizona Rangers.

As a result, Chacon would die on an Arizona gallows. Alvord, after a somewhat profitable career as bank and train robber, would leave the United States to prowl Central America and the West Indies. How he finally "cashed in" isn't definitely known. Some tropics fever could have gotten him around 1910.

Never did John Slaughter allow Burt Alvord to walk behind him. "John told Burt he'd kill him if he ever did," so Billy Breckenridge told me out of Slaughter's earshot. "Maybe he should have on general principles."

Why did such an astute sheriff keep such a sleazy deputy? I didn't know. Neither did anybody else. The whole matter was just one more secret that John Slaughter kept hidden in his inscrutable mind.

He was just as secretive about those wrongdoers whom he assertedly ran down and slew on "general principles."

All the major trigger artists like Holliday, the Earp brothers and Buckskin Frank Leslie had left the Tombstone area when Slaughter, by popular request, undertook to wipe out the bobtail leftovers. Tombstone, the bonanza town, had shrunk to a desert village after pit floodings had destroyed its two principal mines. The high rollers and the card sharks and the farcenous sluts would move to better pickings like Deadwood and the arctic sin towns born of the Alaska Gold Rush. But Cochise County still had enough local talent to keep a conscientious lawman more than busy.

There were train robbers and "bank busters" of minor league standings but just as deadly, if need be, as the more celebrated majors. Roving killers prowled desert mesas from mountain hideouts to slay and rob respectable travelers. Criminals from Mexico were on the dodge in Arizona. Criminals from Arizona and other areas of the American West were fleeing toward Mexico.

And there were rustlers picking off batches of cattle transferred to Mexican buyers at unmarked, unguarded points on the border. Sheriff Slaughter had a forceful personal reason for despising these saddled vermin.

For the international boundary lay straight across his own empire of grass separating 77,770 acres of the San Bernardino spread from 23,000 acres of the sometimes called "Perez place" because Slaughter had bought it from the heirs of a former Mexican owner, Ignacio Perez.

John Slaughter's badge became an emblem of retribution on both sides of the border. In some fitting sense, he always rode alone after the creatures whom he had marked for doom.

Tombstone residents would see him leave his office, mount one of his superb horses and ride off toward one point or another within that 6,000 square mile area of Cochise County. There might be guesses about his destination and his quarry. But no per-

(continued on page 78)

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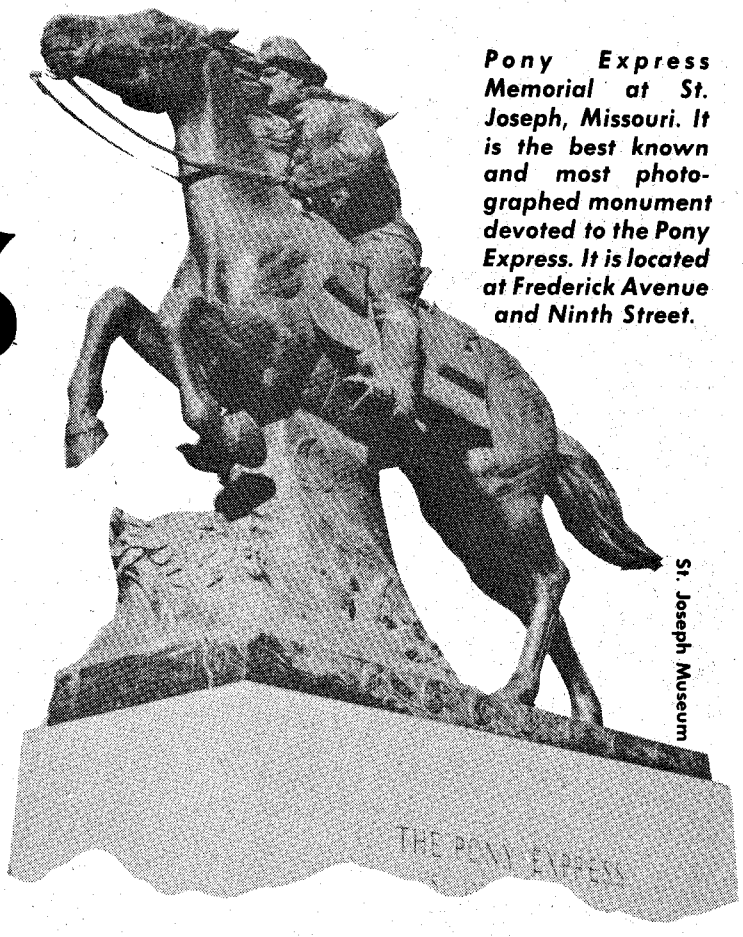
PONY EXPRESS

They Rode The Wild And Vacant Land

By Ted Shead



St. Joseph Museum

Pony Express Memorial at St. Joseph, Missouri. It is the best known and most photographed monument devoted to the Pony Express. It is located at Frederick Avenue and Ninth Street.

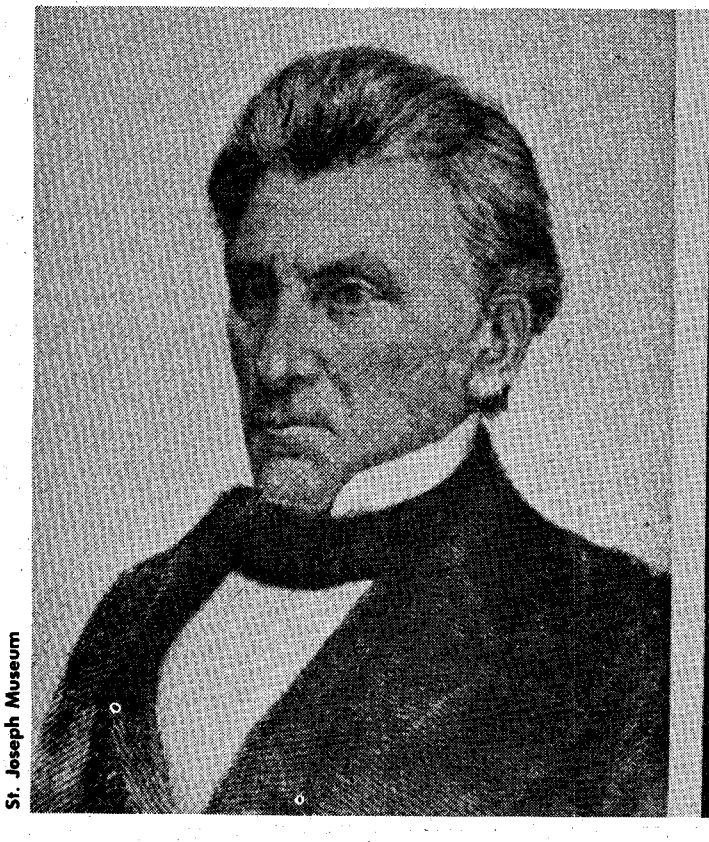
In a few short years, the Pony Express Riders carved a place in the history of the West. Braving incredible hardships, fighting Indians and outlaws, they got the mail through for the princely sum of $25 a week!

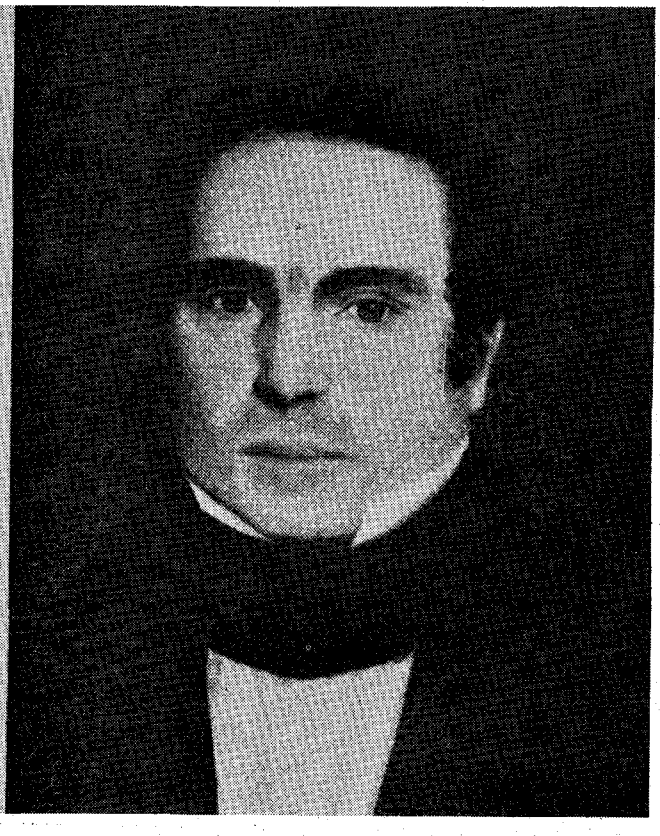
No words in the advertising annals of America had a more heroic response in the chronicles of the West than those that appeared in the San Francisco Bulletin in March, 1860.

"Wanted: Young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages $25 per week. Apply, Central Overland Express, Alta Building, Montgomery Street."

That advertisement heralded the start of the longest relay race in history, the running of the Pony Express.

The challenge inherent in the daring conception lured some of the bravest men in the West. Many of them, in





St. Joseph Museum

W.H. Russell and Alexander Majors, founders of the Pony Express.

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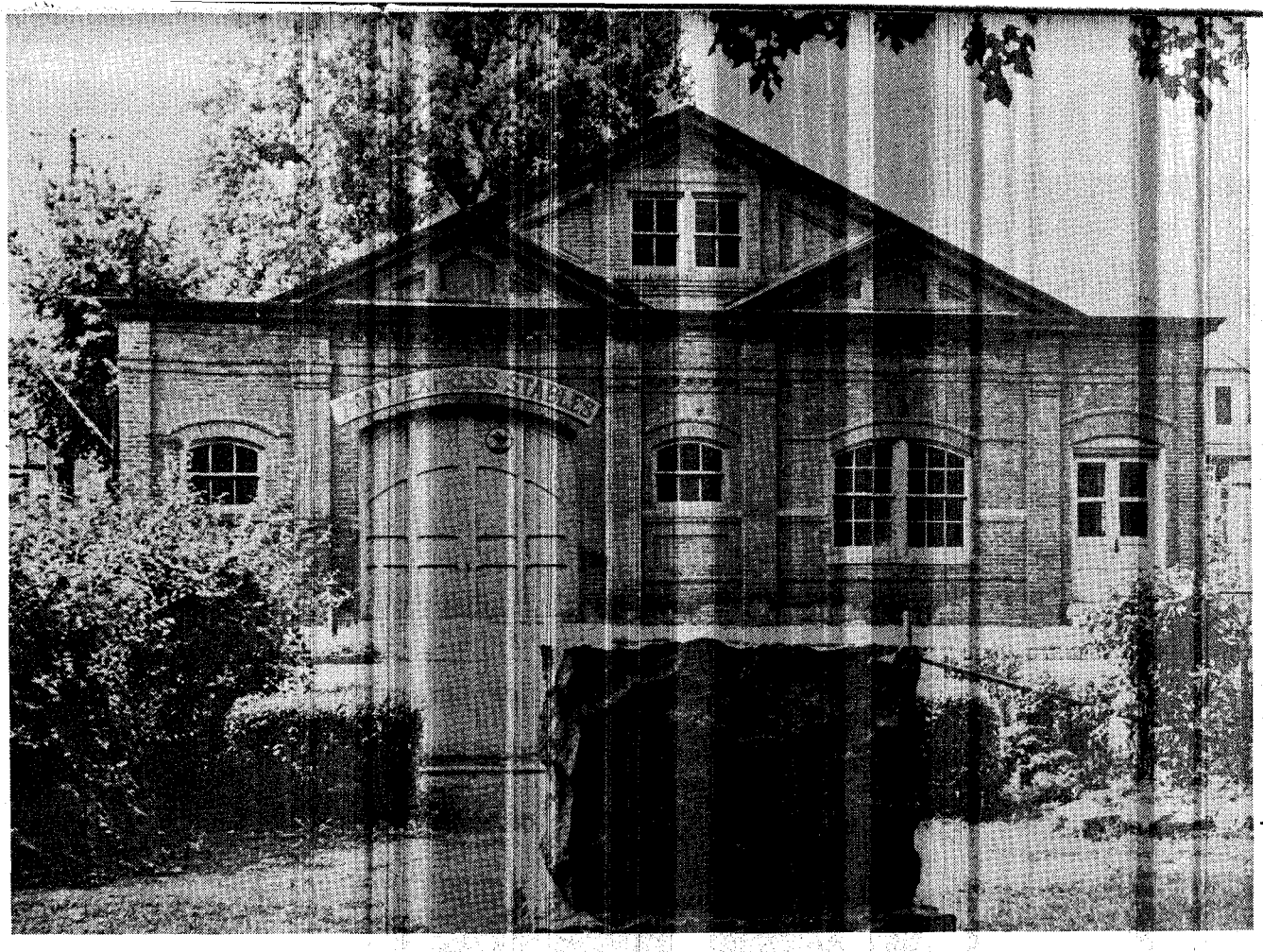

St. Joseph Museum

Pony Express stables at St. Joseph. On April 3, 1860 Billy Richardson, amid cheers, horn tooting and a fusilade of gun shots dashed out of the stable on the first leg of the Pony Express route to the Pacific Coast.

terms of age, were tough, courageous boys, but measured by their ability to survive in a wild and vacant land they were men.

Men like "Pony Bob" Haslam, who made one of the most amazing rides ever recorded — like Johnny Fry, Billy Richardson, Charley Cliff, and his brother, Gus — and, one other, a 14 year old by the name of William F. Cody.

Instigated by Senator W. M. Gwin, of California, in collaboration with William H. Russell, a partner in the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, the idea behind that advertisement promoted the birth of an era in the development of the West that, short-lived as it was, stirred the imagination and aroused the respect everywhere of men seeking ways to weld together a continent.

Historically, the idea of pony riders was not original. 2500 years ago, King Cyrus the Great of Persia maintained scheduled messenger routes over "post roads", and Julius Caesar instituted a courier service that carried imperial reports from London to Rome in 26 days. In 1825, Postmaster John McLean established an "Express Mail" between New York and New Orleans using relay riders on fast horses. He cut the delivery time between the two cities from 16 to 7 days. In 1858, just two years prior to the start of the Pony Express, a westerner of French-Canadian origin, named F. X. Aubrey, using two horses, rode from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Independence, Missouri, a distance of 800 miles in 5½ days to win a $1,000 bet.

In 1860 communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts was slow and uncertain. There were three routes over which mail was carried to California: one by sea, two by overland stage.

The sea route was a semi-monthly service by ship from New York to Panama, thence by dangerous portage across the Isthmus to the West Coast, and again by sea for the final journey to San Francisco. The Passage was subsidized by the Federal Government at an increasingly heavy annual loss, and under normal conditions it required about 22 days.

In 1857 Congress authorized Postmaster Aaron V. Brown to establish an overland route between the Mississippi and San Francisco; and on September 16, 1857, George Butterfield organized a stage line that ran on a semi-weekly schedule between St. Louis and San Francisco. The stage carried mail and passengers and ran from St. Louis, through the Indian Territory, along the Santa Fe Trail to El Paso and Los Angeles, and up the Coast to San Francisco. The first run was made in 23 days, 23 hours, and 40 minutes.

Russell, Majors and Waddell operated their stage line from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Denver, Colorado, then to Salt Lake City and on to California, terminating at San Francisco. Indians and outlaws continually harassed the stage runs, and it took an average of 25 days to make the one-way trip.

Alexander Majors, a Kentuckian by birth and a gentleman, was largely responsible for the organizing of the Pony Express. It required tremendous effort. Rugged, mountainous country was explored for the most practical passes over the Continental Divide and the High Sierras. Streams and rivers were searched for the best places to ford. Bogs, swamps, and quicksand were bridged with willows. Station sites, consisting of rough shelters and corrals for stock, cabins of rock, mud and logs for men, had to be located and built.

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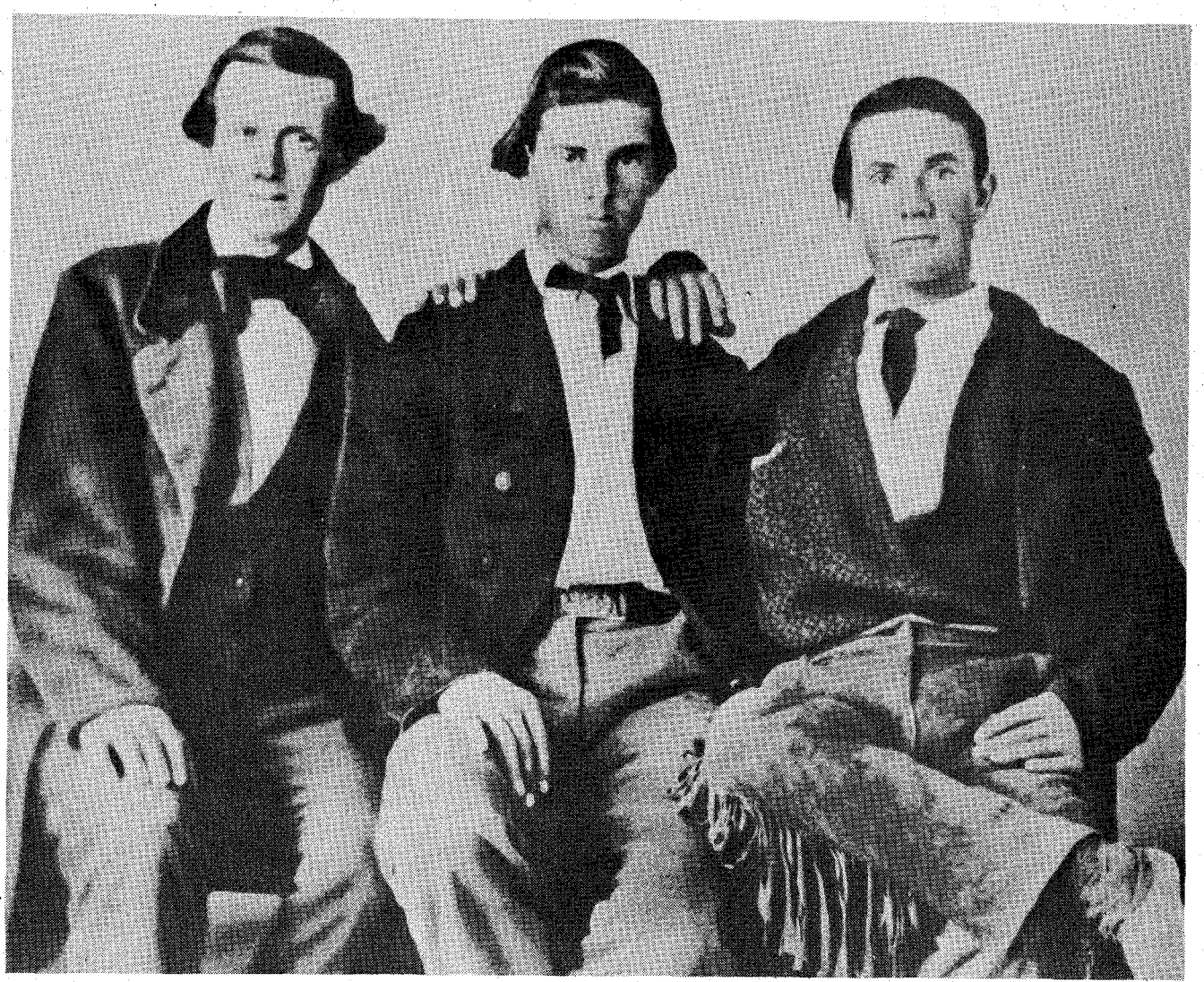

St. Joseph Museum

Three Pony Express riders who rode in the Utah area of the trail. They are Johnny Hancock, Johnny Fisher and William Fisher.

The work accomplished by Alexander Majors in establishing his chain of communications across nearly 2,000 miles of vacant, savage land would be hard to duplicate today. In less than 60 days from the time Senator Gwin broached his idea, 80 young riders had been hired, 400 stock tenders and agents manned the 190 stations that spanned the untamed country, and some 480 head of horses of proven speed and stamina had been purchased.

West of Salt Lake City the riders rode mustangs, descendants of the wild horses brought by the Spaniards to Old Mexico. They were smaller and tougher than the bigger race horses used out of Saint Joseph. In Pony Express days, great herds of wild horses roamed the western plains.

It is a tribute to the judgment of the men who bought the horses, and to the agility of the riders who rode them that, during the 18 months the Pony Express was in existence, only one rider was killed by Indians.

In the beginning the riders were armed to the teeth with rifles, revolvers, and bowie knives, but they quickly relied on the speed of their fleet-footed mounts that few Indian ponies could outrun and discarded everything except one revolver and a bowie knife. A modified "vaquero" saddle that weighed about a third of the standard stock saddle was used, and mail pouches, or "mochilas", carried a maximum of 20 pounds of mail.

The New York newspapers printed special Pony Express editions on tissue, and letters were written on onionskin paper. An average of 200 letters were carried on each trip, and the rate was $5 a half-ounce plus a 10-cent Government stamp.

In comparison with the Overland Stage the speed of the Pony Express was fantastic. A rider changed horses in less than 10 seconds, and the initial westbound trip was made in 9 days, 23 hours. The corresponding eastbound trip took 11 days, 12 hours.

As the trail became better known and the riders more aware of danger spots, particularly with regard to Indian ambush, they cut their time to 8 days in summer, and 10 days in winter. The fastest trip westbound was made when President Lincoln's inaugural address was carried to San Francisco in 7 days, 17 hours.

Outlaws as well as Indians were a threat to the riders, especially in the vicinity of Julesburg which was a notorious rendezvous for some of the most ruthless outlaws in the history of the West. In spite of the dangers, there is record of only one rider losing his mochila. Eventually, many months later, the letters were recovered from the Indians and the mail delivered.

On the eve of civil war, many cities in the United States suffered from riots and disorders, and Saint Joseph did not escape. Newspapers were burnt, records destroyed, and there is controversy as to who was the first rider out of Saint Joseph. Available evidence indicates that Billy

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Richardson was the young rider who, on April 3, 1860, amid cheers, horn tooting, and a fusilade of gun shots, dashed out of Pike's Peak livery stable in Saint Joseph, Missouri, on the first leg of that historic 1,950 mile relay race to the Pacific Coast.

The Fish and Robidoux Livery Stable, known in Pony Express days as the Pike's Peak Livery stables, has been restored. It is now a museum, known as the Pony Express Stables and is located at 914 Penn Street, facing Patee Park. It has been open to the public since May 3, 1959.

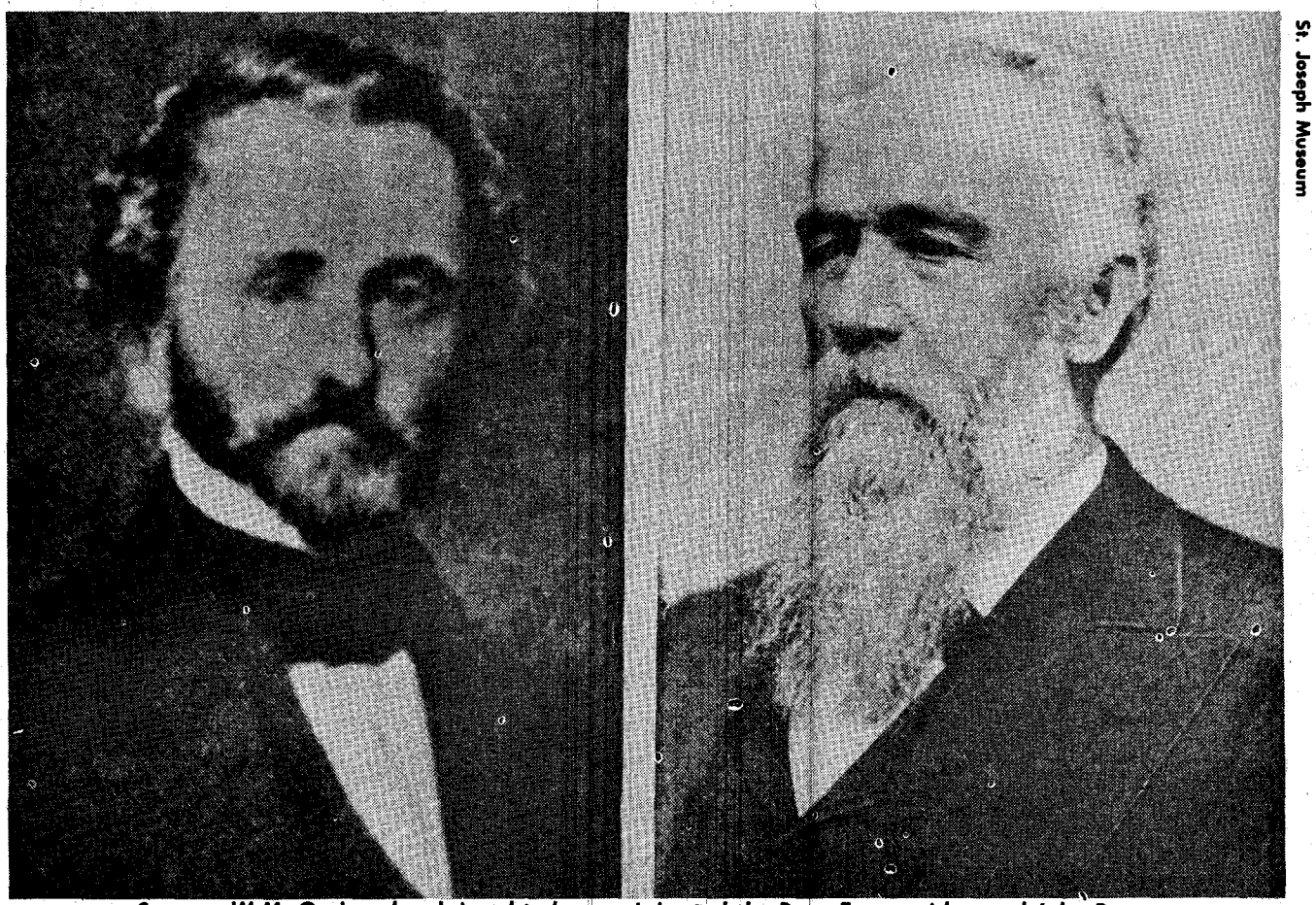
On that same day, April 3rd, James Randall swung into the saddle in front of the Alta Telegraph Company's office on Montgomery Street in San Francisco, rode fast to the Sacramento boat that took him across the Bay, and tossed his "mochila" to Bill Hamilton who waited with one foot in the stirrup to start the eastbound run.

The first westbound mail was delivered in San Francisco at one o'clock in the morning of April 14, 1860, after some 240 hours of continuous riding by 40 riders.

The feats of endurance, courage, and ingenuity performed by the young riders who, day and night, rode the wild country were truly

St. Joseph Museum

William Richardson, Johnny Fry, Charlie Cliff and Gus Cliff, pony express riders out of St. Joseph Missouri.



St. Joseph Museum

Senator W.M. Gwin who claimed to have originated the Pony Express idea and John Butterfield, owner of the Butterfield Stage Line.

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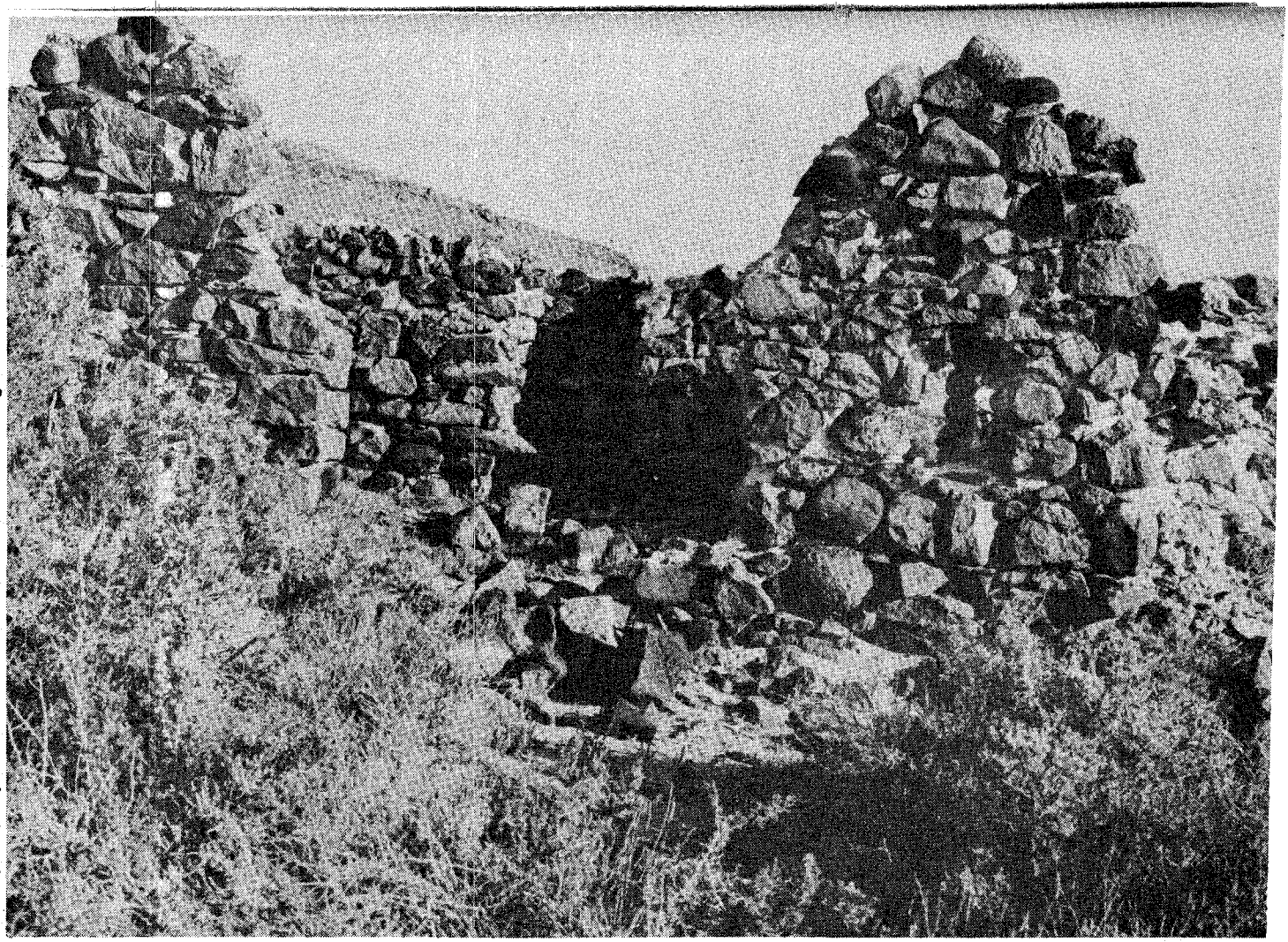

Courtesy U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Ruins of Boyd's Pony Express Station in the Salt Lake District.

amazing. When an Indian war party burnt a number of relay stations, including the home station at Cold Spring in Nevada, and massacred the defenders, "Pony Bob" Haslam rode his horse at full speed for a distance of 25 miles to escape pursuit. Raiding Piutes continually forced him to detour from the trail, and before his ride was finished, "Pony Bob" rode from Friday's Station at the foot of Lake Tahoe in California, to Fort Churchill in Nevada, and back again, a distance of 380 miles.

Robert H. Haslam, "Pony Bob", like many other pony riders, became a successful business man and in later years was manager of the Congress and Auditorium Hotels in Chicago.

The youngest rider of all was Bill Cody. Born in Iowa, January 10, 1846, he was fifteen years old when one day in 1861 he came speeding into Three Crossing Station on the Sweetwater in Wyoming and found that his relief rider had been killed. Young Bill tossed his "mochila" on to the waiting horse and rode on. Except to change horses, he rode a round trip of 384 miles without rest.

William F. Cody, on October 5, 1868, was made Chief of Scouts for the Fifth Cavalry. At 22 years old he became a veteran scout and Indian fighter. He is buried on top of Lookout Mountain, near Golden, Colorado.

In his Memoirs, *Seventy Years on the Frontier,* published in 1893, Alexander Majors tells something of the distances these young riders covered on their regular runs between "Home" stations where both rider and horse changed. These distances were covered at full speed, as fast as the horse could run. Horses were changed every ten or twenty miles, depending upon the character of the country.

"Pony Bob" Haslam rode from Fort Churchill to Smith's Creek, a distance of 120 miles through hostile Indian country. Jay G. Kelley picked up from here and rode to Ruby Valley in Utah, a distance of 166 miles. H. Richardson carried on to Deep Creek Station, 105 miles. The trail then ran to Rush Valley, another 50 miles, which was ridden by George Thatcher. Salt Lake City was the end of the Western Division.

Although it remained in operation until mid-November, the Pony Express officially ended on October 26, 1861. Three principal contributing causes brought it to a close.

In 1861 Congress passed legislation which reduced the surcharge of $5 a half ounce to $1, and it further stipulated that each rider carry 5 pounds of Government mail, free of charge.

Forced to finance a major war against the Indians in order to keep their stations operating, Russell, Majors, and Waddell had already forfeited their stage line, and this thoughtless legislation eliminated all possibility of continuing the service on a profitable basis.

Then, in 1861, Edward Creighton completed the last link in the telegraph line between Omaha and San Francisco, and the heroic venture undertaken by the men of the Pony Express passed into history.

Commemorating its passing, remains of old buildings and monuments mark the rutted trails that were worn deep by the wagons of gold seekers, pioneers, and the wheels of the Overland Stage; those same trails once resounded to the beating hoofs of the Pony Express, and now are cut by the broad swath of con-

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crete and macadam highways.

One hundred and ten years ago, in 1861, the trail ran from Saint Joseph to Fort Kearney, followed the Oregon Trail through the Platte River Valley to the junction of the North and South Branch, crossed the South Platte to Julesburg, and ran on to Fort Laramie in Wyoming. The Rockies were crossed by way of South Pass, and the trail led on to Fort Bridger, which was first established as a trail post in 1843.

Today, U.S. Route 30 follows closely the path of the old trail through the Valley of the Platte from Kearney to Salt Lake City, and many landmarks that guided the pony riders can still be seen. In Salt Lake City the building occupied by the Salt Lake *Tribune* stands on the original site of the Pony Express Headquarters.

Beyond Salt Lake City, lies the desert, a vast expanse of alkali flats and rugged badlands that in the days of the Pony Express were overrun by the renegade bands of warlike Indians led by Chiefs Tintic, Winnemucca, and the savage Pocatello, who harassed the riders all the way into eastern Nevada.

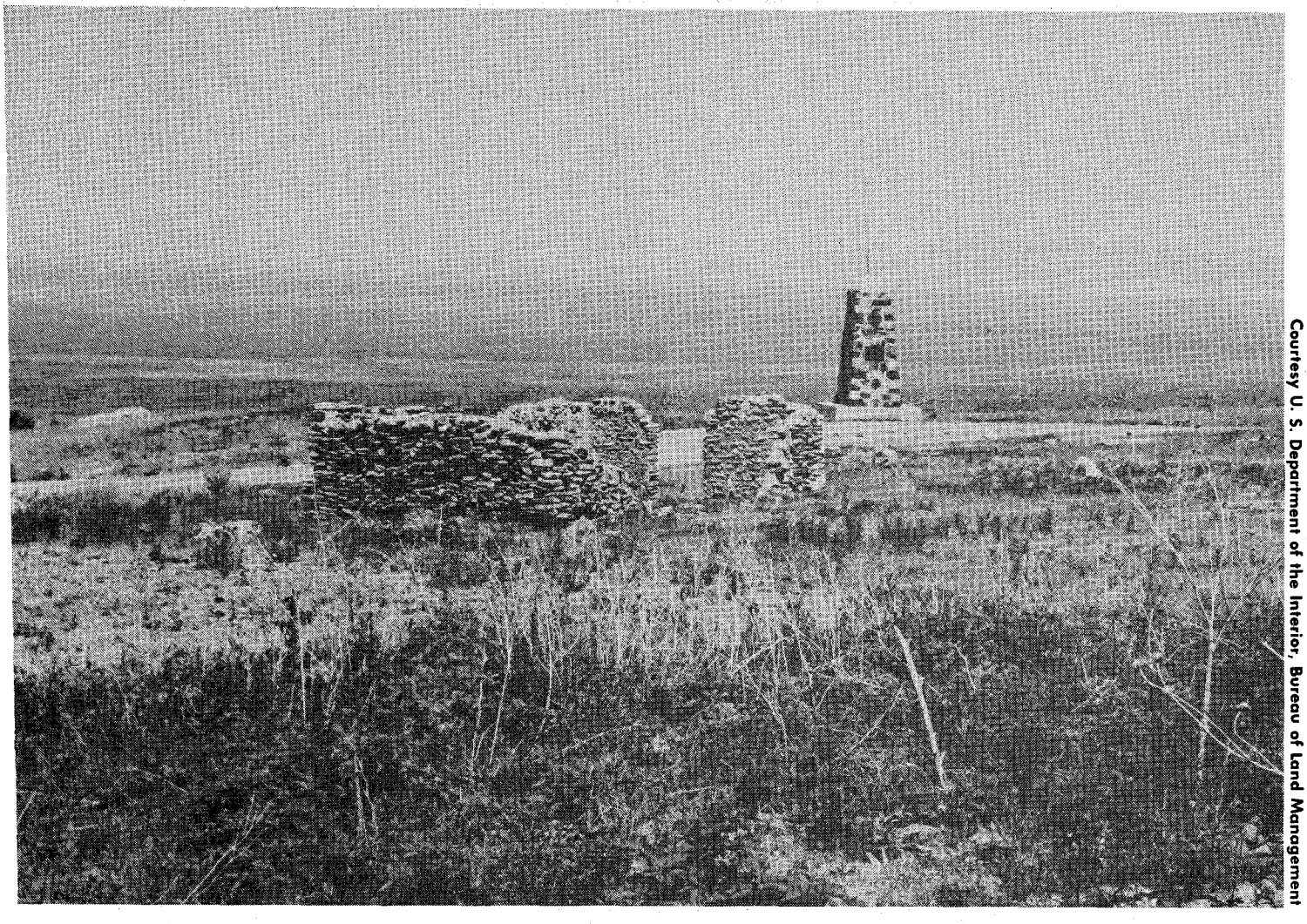
The old trail across the deserts of Nevada, south and west from Salt Lake City to Carson, was explored by Major Howard Egan, division superintendent for the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company, who owned the Pony Express. The route became known as "Egan's Route", and Erastus Egan, son of Major Egan, and Billy Fisher were the riders who rode this portion of the trail from Ruby Valley to Fort Churchill.

Today, a dirt and gravel road traverses the desert country of western Utah and into Nevada, retracing much of the trail followed by the riders of the Pony Express. Monuments marking the old station sites along the way bear metal plaques furnished by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, and remains of many of the old buildings can be seen.

Those who would retrace the hoofbeats of history across the desert lands may obtain a map published by the Bureau of Land Management which shows the sites of the Pony Express stations in relation to the existing road that runs westerly from the town of Fairfield, Utah, by writing to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Utah Land Office, P.O. Box 11505, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111.

U. S. Route 50 retraces portions of the old trail through Nevada, and Pony Express Camp Ground, between Eureka and Austin, is on the site of the old route, which went on west to Dayton and Carson City. About 15 miles southwest of Carson City the old trail passed through Genoa. Lying east of Lake Tahoe near the western border of Nevada, Genoa was known as Mormon Station and was the first settlement in Nevada. The site is now in Mormon Station State Park, about 3½ miles west of U.S. Route 395.

Located on the original site in the park is a replica of the two-story log cabin and stockade built in 1849 by Hampton S. Beatie and purchased in 1851 by Colonel John Reese who,



Courtesy U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Remains of Simpson Springs station in the Salt Lake District of the trail.

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Courtesy U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Pony Express monument at Lookout Pass in the Salt Lake District of the trail.

with 18 other Mormons, settled there. In 1856 Mormon Station was renamed Genoa. The original cabin which served as a Pony Express and Overland Stage station was destroyed by fire in 1910.

Following the route of U.S. 50, the

(continued on page 80)

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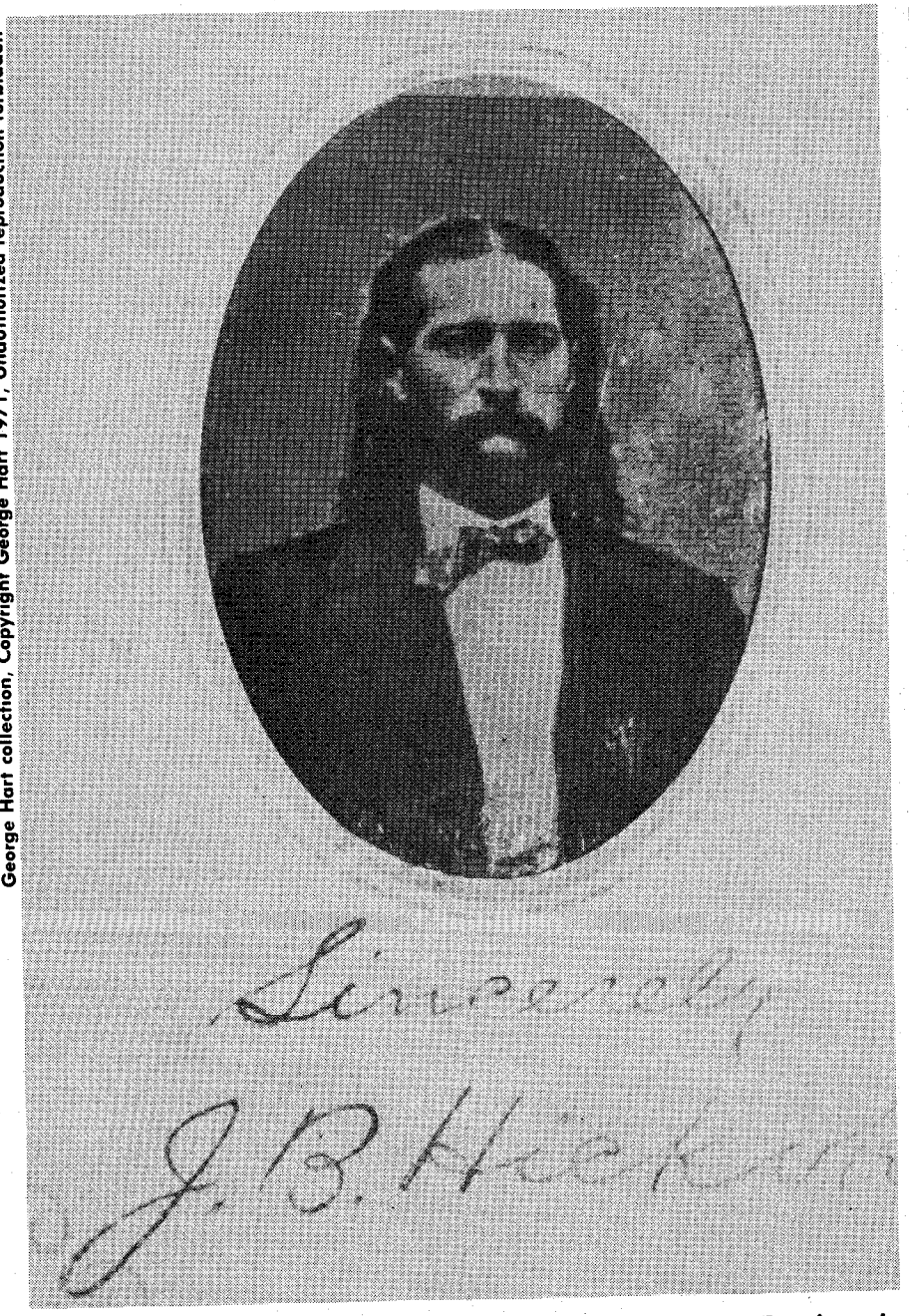
JACK McCALL, Frontier Enigma

By George Hart

George Hart collection, Copyright George Hart 1971, Unauthorized reproduction forbidden

For awhile, the man who murdered J. B. Hickok was hailed as a hero but this is the thoroughly documented account of what actually happened in Deadwood, Dakota Territory, August 2, 1876. Wild Bill Hickok's assassin almost got away with murder.



Wild Bill Hickok, murdered by Jack McCall, August 2, 1876 at Deadwood, Dakota Territory. This is the only known autographed photo of Wild Bill.

Author's Note.

On July 15, 1957, I contacted the United States District Court, District of South Dakota, Sioux Falls, concerning the trial of John McCall for the murder of James Butler Hickok. Within a short time I received certified copies of the complete court file and journal entries.

In April, 1960, using the records of the Pardon Attorney, Department of Justice, in the National Archives, I secured photostats of the pardon case file for John McCall.

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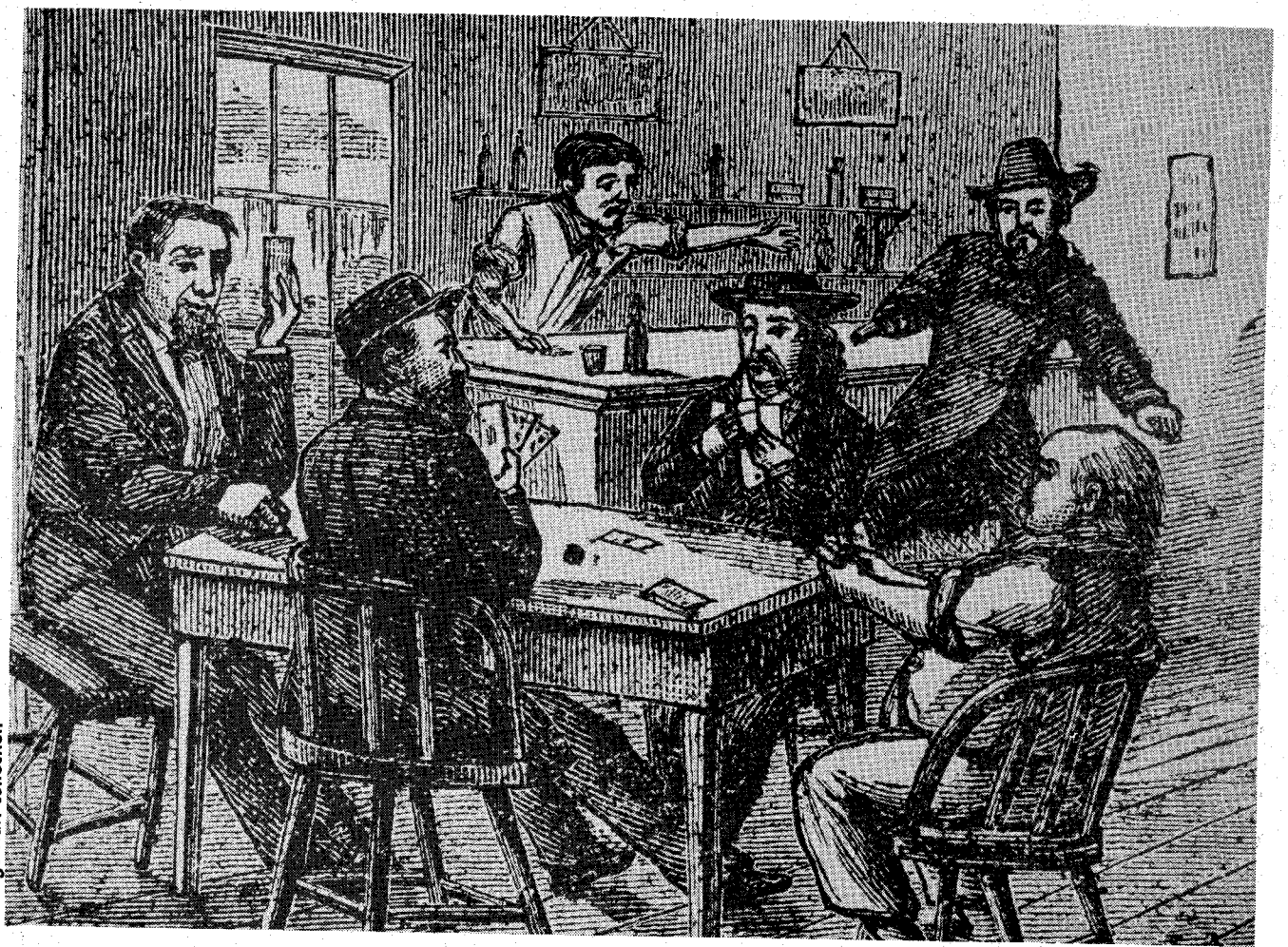

George Hart collection

Highly imaginative woodcut depicting the murder of Wild Bill.

This material had rarely, if ever, been used for research, and I believe I was the first person in modern times to do so.

My original intent had been to combine this data with a study of McCall's life before he murdered Hickok. After an exhaustive search of many years nothing substantial, other than what was already in my files, has turned up dealing with his early life.

It is hoped this article will be read by a descendant of the McCall family who will come forward to add something to the story of Jack McCall. In the 1950's there was a man running around the country claiming to be the nephew of THE Jack McCall. However, if this was so, he showed a decided lack of knowledge of the facts known about his "uncle".

It just may be that, aside from his connection with Wild Bill, John McCall is destined to remain a cipher.

****

Throughout the years J.B. Hickok's assassination has been told and retold with varying degrees of accuracy. The hard, cold facts are that he was shot in the back of the head by one Jack McCall in Number 10 saloon at Deadwood, Dakota Territory, on the afternoon of August 2, 1876.

What was the murderer's motivation? None of the theories hold much water. It seems McCall was associated in some way with John Varnes. Varnes was a sometimes hardcase who was used to receiving one-way tickets out of the frontier towns. It is not implausible that he and others of his type utilized McCall as a preventative measure against Hickok becoming Deadwood's lawman. Whether Wild Bill would have accepted such an appointment at this stage of his life is open to question.

McCall was calling himself Bill Sutherland at the time he committed his heinous act. He was about twenty-five and reputed to have been born in Jefferson County, Kentucky. What he did between the time he left his home state and showed up in the Black Hills is anybody's guess. A reporter for the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* described him thusly:

"Never did a more forbidding countenance face a court than that of Jack McCall. His head, which is covered by a thick crop of chestnut hair, is very narrow as to the parts occupied by the intellectual portion of the brain, while the animal development is exceedingly large. A small, sandy mustache covers a sensual mouth. The nose is what is commonly called 'snub'. Cross eyes and a florid complexion, and the picture is finished."

Perpetrators of deeds such as McCall's are usually depicted as having "forbidding countenance". In recent years one or two "alleged" pictures of McCall have been floating around, but they are so obviously spurious as to be totally unworthy of consideration. Actually, there exists no known authenticated photograph of him, so until one is discovered we must trust to the supposed veractiy of the man from the *Inter-Ocean.*

Almost immediately after he shot Hickok, McCall was apprehended by a group of concerned inhabitants of Deadwood, and the next day he was brought before what was called a "miners' court". The trial was somewhat of a farce. Either bribery was involved or McCall managed to sell the jurors a "bill of goods". On the other hand, it is possible the twelve men just didn't give a damn.

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Despite the protestations of the able prosecutor, Colonel George May, the appointed defender, Judge Miller, succeeded in getting McCall off. After hearing the verdict Judge W.L. Kuykendall turned him loose.

Notwithstanding alleged threats by friends of Wild Bill, McCall seems to have left town under his own steam. He may have considered his present surroundings unhealthy and headed for Wyoming Territory where apparently he felt much safer. Before his departure he took great pains in painting a grandiose picture of himself to newspaper correspondents who were all too willing to take it down.

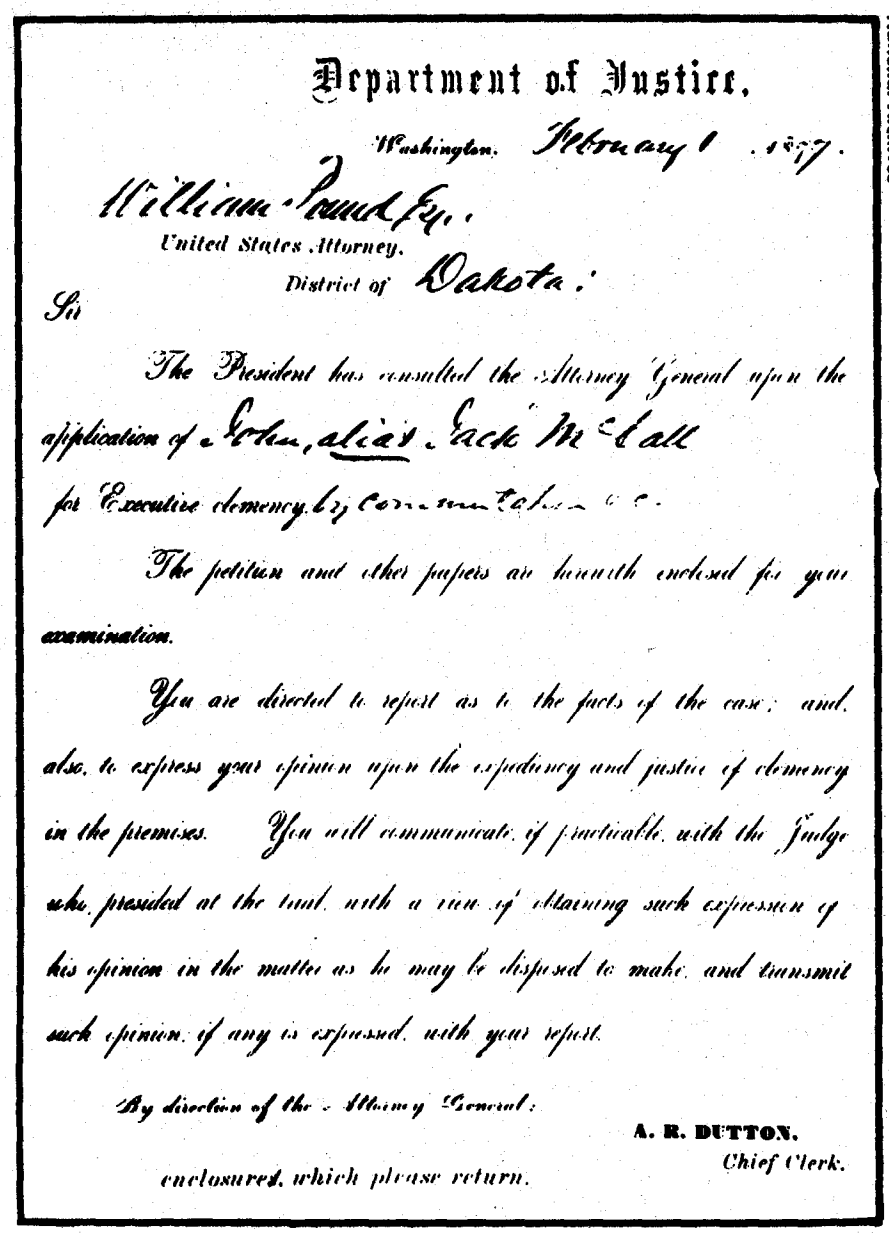
He regaled them with tales of Indian fighting, buffalo hunting, trapping etc. Of course, he was to tell again and again of Wild Bill shooting down his brother at Hays City, Kansas, in 1869, and how he, Jack McCall, had stalked Hickok for years. No one cared to ask how it was that he took so long to wreak vengeance on his brother's killer. Wild Bill, being in the public eye most of those years, should not have been hard to find.

Each time he told the story he embellished it a bit more. The current version had Hickok challenging McCall's kinsman over some trivial matter. The brother being unarmed refused. Then Wild Bill threw him one of his own pistols and exclaimed, "Damn you, defend yourself!" The elder McCall took it, but before he could raise the weapon Hickok shot him dead.

To hear McCall tell it, he was not forcibly taken after murdering Wild Bill but rather was persuaded to give himself up for trial. Considering the outcome of the "trial" the reporters cannot be blamed for giving credence to that part of his account.

By the time he reached Laramie City, McCall considered himself quite a showpiece. He seemed to be enjoying his new found fame, even though it be based on dispatching a man in a most despicable manner. Unfortunately for McCall he hadn't counted on the redoubtable Colonel May's presence among the crowds that flocked around him.

Unable to bear the brag spewing out of the murderer's mouth, the Colonel took note of the contradictions in his tales and sought out the law. Perhaps the following interview, the last one given by McCall prior to his second arrest,



Department of Justice.

Washington, February 1, 1877.

William Pound Esq.,
United States Attorney,
District of Dakota.

Sir

The President has consulted the Attorney General upon the application of one John, alias Jack McCall for Executive clemency by commutation &c.

The petition and other papers are herewith enclosed for your examination.

You are directed to report as to the facts of the case; and also, to express your opinion upon the expediency and justice of clemency in the premises. You will communicate if practicable with the Judge who presided at the trial with a view of obtaining such expression of his opinion in the matter as he may be disposed to make, and transmit such opinion, if any is expressed, with your report.

By direction of the Attorney General:

A. R. DUTTON,
Chief Clerk.

enclosures, which please return.

National Archives

Department of Justice letter of instruction to Attorney Pound.

spurred Colonel May to make another attempt to see that justice was done. The Laramie *Sentinel* says:

"Considerable excitement was created yesterday by the news that John Sutherland, who shot Wild Bill at Deadwood, some time ago, was in the city. We therefore took some pains to get an interview with him in order to learn the particulars of the shooting. We met Sutherland-and with several who were more or less acquainted with him at Deadwood-drew him into conversation upon the matter, the substance of which we give our readers:

"It seems that on the day previous to the shooting, Sutherland and Wild Bill had an altercation, the former claiming that Bill had stolen his dust in a 'poker game'. The trouble increased until Sutherland struck Wild Bill in the face, Bill did not resent it, however, but smiled and said, 'that is all right'. The next afternoon between 3 and 4 o'clock, Sutherland went into the 'Cricket Saloon' where Wild Bill, in company with several others, was playing cards and after walking up and down the hall a few times, stepped up to Wild Bill and telling him to 'look out!' shot him, the ball entering at the ear.

He says that when he told him to 'look out,' Bill smiled but did not offer any resistance or say anything. Sutherland then 'covered' those with his revolver who sat near, and snapped it, but as he says, 'as luck would have it', the damned cylinder turned, but the thing wouldn't go! He then made for a horse, tied near the saloon, with the intention of

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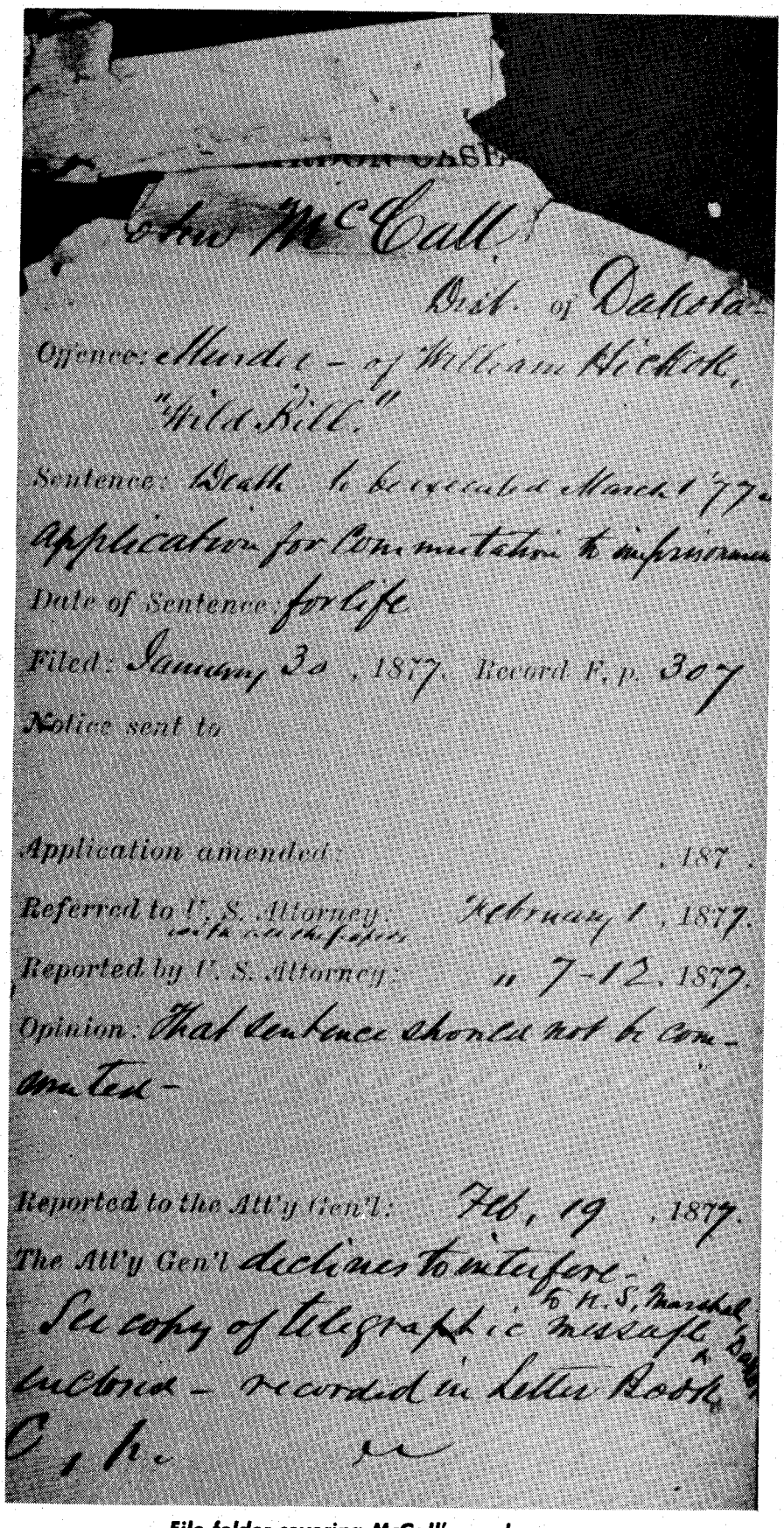
John McCall
Dist. of Dakota
Offence: Murder of William Hickok,
"Wild Bill."
Sentence: Death to be executed March 1877
Application for Commutation & Pardon
Date of Sentence: for life
Filed: January 30, 1877. Record F, p. 307
Notice sent to
Application amended: , 187 .
Referred to U. S. Attorney: February 1, 1877.
Reported by U. S. Attorney: " 7-12, 1877.
Opinion: That Sentence should not be Commuted -
Reported to the Att'y Gen'l: Feb. 19 , 1877.
The Att'y Gen'l declines to interfere.
To U. S. Marshal
See copy of telegraphic message
enclosed - recorded in Letter Book
C. H.

National Archives

File folder covering McCall's pardon case.

mounting and making his escape, but the cinch was so loose that the saddle turned and left him with a crowd of several hundred men about him. He saw that resistance was useless and gave himself up to arrest.

"He was arrested and lodged in jail, guarded by twenty-five armed men. The excitement was intense, and as soon as the news got out every man in the gulch turned out on the street. Sutherland says that the street, which is nearly two miles in length, was packed so full that there was hardly standing room, and it is uncertain what would have been the result had not a Mexican just then come into town with an Indian's head. Having no knife to scalp his victim he had brought in the whole head, and this turned the whole tide of the excitement in that direction and arrangements were soon made for a trial. The trial was conducted according to custom; counsel was employed for Sutherland, and he was acquitted as stated in the papers.

"Jack Sutherland, as he is called, was at the time of the shooting engaged in carrying the mails from Red Cloud to Deadwood, a job that no one else would attempt.

"He says that Wild Bill asked him when he first met him, if he was from Hayes, Kansas, but Sutherland denied ever having been there. Sutherland knew him, however, in Hays, and recognized him in Deadwoood at once as the man who killed his brother ..."

Take note that McCall was becoming so reckless that he now claimed to have hit Wild Bill. As if this were not enough, the next day he approaches Hickok, tells him to "look out" and thereupon shoots him. Wild Bill once again offering no resistance, but merely grinning about his own imminent demise!

One can imagine Colonel May, his full wrath aroused, storming away from the group to make out his report to the authorities.

On August 29, 1876, McCall was arrested. The Cheyenne *Daily Leader* for August 30, 1876, reported that:

"Jack McCall, the man who murdered Wild Bill at Deadwood, was arrested in Lararmie City yesterday by Deputy Marshal Balcombe. He will be brought to this city today, and examined tomorrow before U.S. Commissioner Bruner, when, if the evidence against him be sufficient, he will be held to await a requisition from the Governor of Dakota, and be taken to Yankton for trial for his crime.

"One of the witnesses who will appear against him tomorrow will testify that when McCall stopped at Horse Creek, on his way to this city, he stated that Wild Bill never killed a brother of his, but that he killed Wild Bill merely because Bill snatched a card from his hand during the progress of a game between them. The penitentiary seems to be looming up before McCall."

The officials decided it would be a

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needless risk to transport McCall to Cheyenne, so he was kept in Laramie and there examined before Judge Blair. On August 30, in answer to a question put to him by Blair, he admitted to the murder of Wild Bill. This examination seems to have been the beginning of the press' disenchantment with McCall. Up to this time he had been treated to some degree as a carefree rogue. No doubt contributing to the change in attitude were reports like the following which appeared in *Daily Leader* for September 1, 1876:

"It is thought by officers here that McCall has killed another man and robbed him since shooting Wild Bill. The reason for this belief is that when McCall was tried in Deadwood he had but forty three dollars on his person, while on the very next day he was sporting a costly gold watch and chain, and had also a large sum of money. An investigation of the circumstances is now being made, and startling developments may be expected."

The outcome of the examination found Judge Blair deciding to send McCall to Yankton, Dakota Territory, for trial. The law of double jeopardy did not apply in McCall's case becasue the Deadwood court was not legally constituted.

At Yankton, while waiting to be tried, McCall and a fellow prisoner, McCarty, attempted to break jail on November 9, 1876. After assaulting the jailor they were just ready to step through the doorway, but ran smack into U.S. Marshal Burdick and an assistant. The escapees meekly surrendered and were promptly put into irons.

Sadly, the intrepid Colonel May died before the trial, but another admirer of Wild Bill *was* there, his brother, Lorenzo Butler Hickok. It took place on December 4, 5, and 6, 1876.

McCall's attorneys were W.H.H. Beadle and Oliver Shannon. The United States was represented by William Pound. Chief Justice P.C. Shannon, who, of course, was *not* related to McCall's attorney, Oliver Shannon, was presiding judge. Foreman John Treadway, Secretary Charles H. Edwards, Hiram A. Dunham, William Box, George Pike, Lewis Clark, West Negus, Isaac N. Esmay, Henry T. Mowry, Nelson Armstrong, James A. Withee and Martin L. Winchell composed the jury.

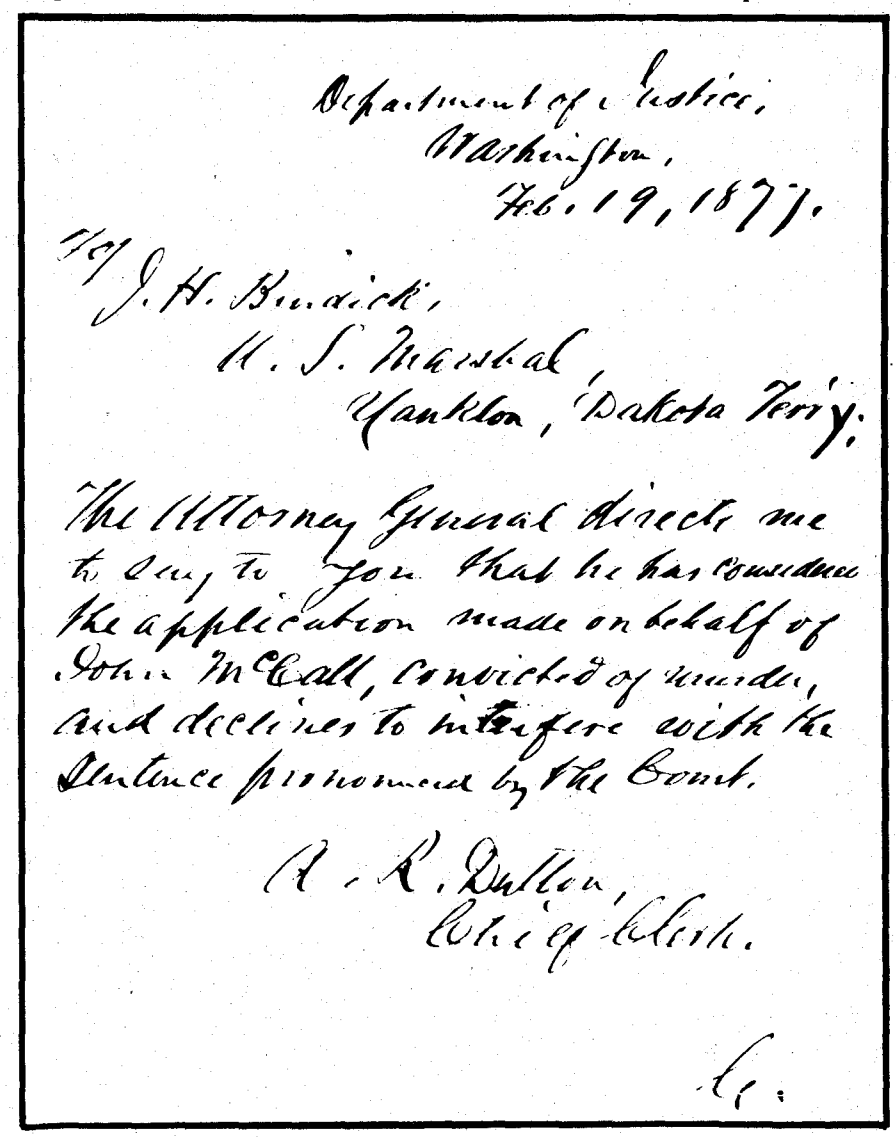
The abortive attempt to gain his freedom did not look good for McCall, and no one knew it better than he. Shortly thereafter and sometime before he finally came to trial he became quite cooperative and started to spill his guts out. He implicated John Varnes in an alleged assassination plot. Relegating himself to the role of a mere hireling, the desperate man soft pedaled his portrayal of the "avenging angel." The oft changing story was now one of hard feeling between Varnes and Hickok that went back to Wild Bill's Denver days. My reasearch has determined that Varnes may have at one time been a Denver man, but there is not enough evidence to support McCall's statements. His unreliability as a witness to happenings that *can be checked* prevent his remarks from standing on their own.

In any event, a posse took out after Varnes, but he apparently vacated the Black Hills region. He is reputed to have returned to his old haunts in Denver, where his death was brought on by an addiction to opium.

Perhaps the most damning testimony at McCall's trial and that which was most responsible for his conviction was that given by George M. Shingle. The Yankton *Press and Dakotaian* reported evidence given by Shingle as follows:

" ... On the 2nd of August in a saloon at Deadwood kept by Carl Mann and Jerry Lewis, Wild Bill was there playing cards. There was a party of 3 or 4 others sitting at the same table. I was in the room at the time. I saw a man come in the saloon who is here now. It is the defendant here present. He walked towards the back door of the saloon."

"When within 3 or 4 feet of the door he turned and came up behind Wild Bill. He put a pistol within 2 or 3 feet of Wild Bill's head and fired. As he fired he said, 'take that.' The ball entered the back part of Wild



Department of Justice,
Washington,
Feb. 19, 1877.

To J. H. Burdick,
U. S. Marshal,
Yankton, Dakota Terry.

The Attorney General directs me to say to you that he has considered the application made on behalf of John McCall, convicted of murder, and declines to interfere with the sentence pronounced by the Court.

A. R. Dalton,
Chief Clerk.

Copy of Telegram from the Department of Justice to the U.S. Marshal at Yankton.

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Morrow Collection, Univ. of South Dakota Museum

Scene at Yankton, Dakota Territory in 1876. Jack McCall was tried here during early December of that year.

Bill's head and came out of the right cheek entering the left wrist of Captain Massey (Massie). The shot killed Wild Bill almost instantly. He did not move and said nothing. He sat in the chair a couple of minutes and then fell over backwards. I made an examination of Wild Bill and found him dead ..."

Under cross - examination he replied:

"... I was weighing out gold dust. The room where the bar was, was twenty-four feet wide. The bar took up 8 feet of the room and was twenty feet long. I was standing at the end of the bar. The room was about eighty feet long. Bill was sitting with his back to the back door and fronting the bar. McCall got around alongside of this partition and came up behind Bill. Captain Massie and Wild Bill were having a dispute about the game and I looked up, when I saw McCall in the act of shooting.

Wild Bill was prospecting most of the time in the Hills. He did not keep a faro bank. I know of Bill killing three men, but in self defense and was tried and acquitted. He was a constant drinker. I saw the defendant in Deadwood, but was not acquainted with him. Wild Bill was sober when this shooting occurred. Could not say that McCall was drunk. The killing occurred about three or four o'clock p.m. Eight persons were in the room when the shooting occurred ..."

Other prosecution witnesses were called, but their testimony either corroborated what Shingle had said or dealt with territorial boundaries and technical problems that had to be resolved. The defense had no witnesses! McCall's attorneys made a last ditch attempt to have him discharged, but in actuality it was all over. Things were now in the hands of the jury, and on the night of December 6, they were officially "charged by the Court". After only a little over three hours of deliberation the twelve men were ready with their verdict. They found him guilty of murder.

Throughout the trial McCall managed to maintain a semblance of bravado, but things must have looked rather hopeless to him when the time came for sentencing. On January 3, 1877 he was sentenced to be hanged on March 1, 1877. Still, there was a chance for commutation. Having notified Judge Shannon and U.S. Attorney Pound that they were applying to the President for a pardon or commutation, McCall's attorneys started the ball rolling. Two petitions were sent off to the President. These appeals were fleshed out to cover many points; however, it all boils down to a single premise. That is, McCall is pictured as a misguided youth who was in the grip of *"delirium tremens"* at the time of the shooting.

On February 7, in response to a letter of instruction received from

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the Department of Justice, William Pound penned this letter to the Attorney General:

"Sir:

I am in receipt of your letter of the 1st instant ... relative to the commutation of the sentence of death in the case of John McCall, *alias* Jack McCall ...

" ... I have never known a case where the interests of a prisoner were more carefully guarded by the Court than this one ... Upon the question of drunkenness, which is urged in the petitions as a main reason for the commutation of his sentence, the Court, in its charge to the jury declared it their right and duty, if they had, from all the evidence, a reasonable doubt that the prisoner acted with a mind so clear and unclouded as to be able to form and execute a deliberate purpose, to convict of manslaughter only...

"The murder having been a deliberate assassination, of the most cowardly character, an effort seems to be made now again, as it was on the trial, to excuse or palliate the act by a reference to the peculiar condition of society as it then existed in the Black Hills...

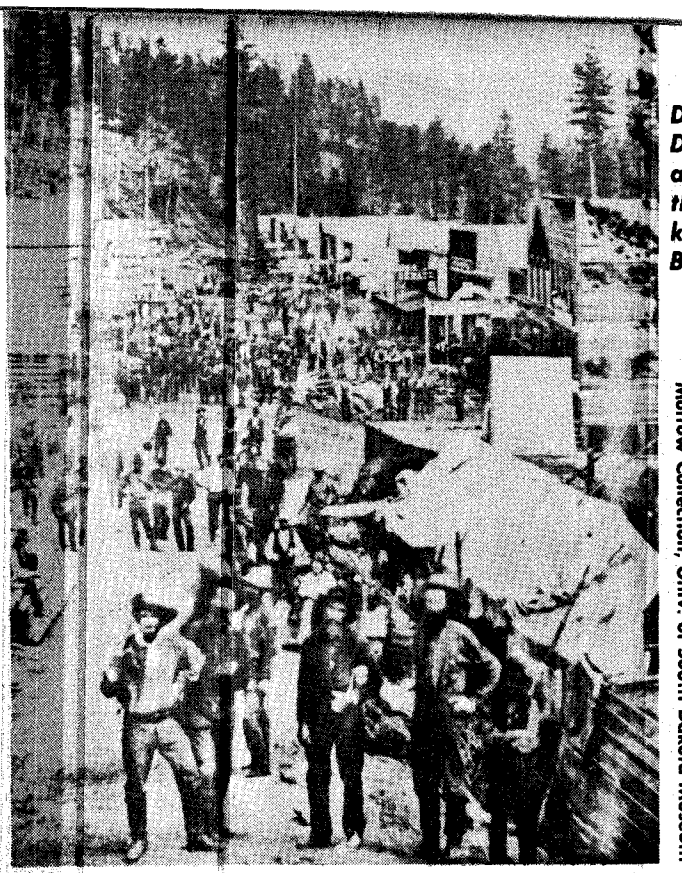
"How many *aliases* the prisoner has, it would be difficult to tell ... He seems to be a person of a depraved and wicked heart, without regard for human life...

"... The testimony shows that some days before the homicide McCall had pushed himself into a game of cards with 'Wild Bill'. He bet more than he had and lost his money. Wild Bill told him he could pay when he was able to and offered to lend him some money for his immediate wants. Although the offer seemed to be made in the most kindly spirit, McCall became angry, rejected the money, and left the house...

"... The murder was deliberately planned, and executed in a cruel and cowardly manner, by a man who evidently has no regard whatever for human life. If the death penalty is to be inflicted in any case, I do not see upon what real ground the proposed leniency would be based in this particular case...

Very Respectfully,
Your Obt Servt,
Wm. Pound,
U.S. Attorney."

On February 19, 1877, the Department of Justice sent a telegram to U.S. Marshal J.H. Burdick informing him that the Attorney General, "... declines to interfere with the sentence pronounced by the Court..."



Deadwood, Dakota Territory as it appeared at the time of the killing of Wild Bill by Jack McCall.

Morrow Collection, Univ. of South Dakota Museum

In the weeks prior to his execution McCall's actions were still somewhat of a *cause celebre.* Inspired by this attention the condemned man decided to write a sort of memoir to be published after his death. However, fate was to intervene in the form of a letter addressed to the U.S. Marshal:

"Louisville, Kentucky,
February 25, 1877.

To the Marshal of Yankton:
Dear Sir:

I saw in the morning papers a piece about the sentence of the murderer of Wild Bill, Jack McCall. There was a young man of the name John McCall left here about six years ago, who has not been heard from for the last three years. He has a father, mother, and three sisters living here in Louisville, who are very uneasy about him since they heard about the murder of Wild Bill. If you can send us any information about him, we would be very thankful to you.

"This John McCall is about twenty-five years old, has light hair, inclined to curl, and one eye crossed. I cannot say about his height, as he was not grown when he left here. Please write as soon as convenient, as we are very anxious to hear from you.

Very respectfully,
Mary A. McCall."

On the night before his execution McCall destroyed the article he had written, and instead he wrote a letter to Mary McCall that remained personal for over 95 years. Unless something short of a miracle occurs, we may never know what it contained. Did he confirm Mary's suspicions that he was her brother? Or did his response leave her with new hope that her missing relative may yet turn up one day and return to the family?

The newspapermen covering the hanging gave melodramatic accounts of the event, but it will suffice to say here in conclusion that on the morning of March 1, 1877, Jack McCall, in all irony was able to muster up the courage that seemed to elude him throughout his short life. In brief, he died game.

REFERENCE SOURCES:

Black Hills Pioneer;
Cheyenne *Daily Leader,*
Chicago *inter-Ocean;*
Denver *Rocky Mountain News;*
Laramie *Sentinel;*
Yankton *Press and Dakotaian;*
The Filson Club;
George Hart Western Americana Collection;
United States District Court, District of South Dakota
National Archives;

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Whiskey Jim was a notorious bootlegger of illegal whiskey to Indians, working out of Fort Griffin, Texas, trading his way through the Texas Panhandle. In 1874, Col. R. S. Mackenzie ordered his 4th Cavalry patrols to nail him dead or alive. Whiskey Jim subsequently became a horse thief in other parts of Texas.

Photo furnished by the author

James "Whiskey" Jim Greathouse lived only to the age of 27, but in his short life he managed to leave a trail of lawlessness, punctuated by numerous killings that involved many known Western bad men.

In 1874 Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie ordered his 4th Cavalry patrols to get James Greathouse, alias Whiskey Jim, dead or alive, preferably dead.

Whiskey Jim was a notorious peddler of contraband alcohol to Indians, working out of Fort Griffin, Texas. He packed it north into the panhandle and bartered it for ten times its original value.

Because he furnished them firewater in enormous quantities, it caused many of the erstwhile peaceful tribes to go on the murdering warpath. Small wonder the old Indian fighter Mackenzie wanted him put out of business permanently and suddenly. But that was easier desired than done, for Whiskey Jim was wily and a very shrewd operator.

Nothing much is known of him except that he was born and reared somewhere in Texas. He appeared at Fort Griffin when he was twenty years old, already experienced in the whiskey trade.

As Mackenzie sent his cavalry troops out, they soon became so numerous north to the Canadian River that Whiskey Jim was forced to desist. He heard of the order and wisely did not return to Fort Griffin. Instead he went to a trading post at Rath on Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River.

Out of the lucrative whiskey trade he formed a ruthless gang of livestock thieves. This bunch of outlaws, varying from ten to thirty in number as circumstances dictated, raided north into the Indian Territory and west into New Mexico.

His gang had no respect for livestock ownership or circumstances. They stole the horses and mules of buffalo hunters, which left them afoot and too often at the mercy of raiding Indians.

WHISKEY JIM

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After losing their riding and wagon stock one group of buffalo hunters walked into Rath. Whiskey Jim was present, listening to the angry men tell their story. He then offered to take a bunch of riders, naturally his own gang, to track down the thieves and recover their stock for so much per head.

Immediately commissioned, he went out for a few days and returned with all the buffalo hunters' animals. His gang had stolen them in the first place.

After several such shady deals the speed of his recoveries drew dire suspicion down on his head. He was subsequently accused of stealing the animals and returning them for a payoff.

Cursing the hunters who confronted him about the matter, he said they could thereafter stew in their own juice. The Comanches raided during the next few days and often thereafter, stealing all the livestock they could find. Whiskey Jim's former "clients" were never sure whether or not they had actually been swindled.

During this period of running off and recovering buffalo hunters' stock in 1875, two members of the gang, Larapie Dan and Little Red Randolph, stole a fine thoroughbred bay mare from a tough Rath gambler. The two culprits recovered it for a big fee. A couple of weeks later they rustled the mare again and made another recovery.

They pulled the deal twice more. His suspicions long aroused, the gambler accosted Whiskey Jim when he appeared in Rath.

"I am going to kill you, Larapie Dan and Little Red the next time my fancy mare disappears from the stable where she is kept," he threatened.

"Now, it's sure news to me you been losing her," Whiskey Jim replied casually. "But this killing talk, I'd just as soon beef you any time you want to claw your shootin' iron."

The tough gambler hesitated. Whiskey Jim was already noted for having killed a number of men in desperate gunfights.

"Well, I'm telling you, that is what is going to happen if I have to buy back my mare once more!"

The gambler did not run Whiskey Jim out. Rath was already too hot for him. He took Larapie Dan and Little Red north to the trading post of Henry Hamburg. Leaving them there he went on towards Red River, scouting around to learn what they could steal, and how to make connections for Indian whiskey selling again.

Some freighters came in to rest over at the trading post. Two nights later, Larapie Dan and Little Red were caught stealing horses from the rope corral. The hardened teamsters promptly hanged them to lifted wagon tongues.

Hearing this news on his return ride before reaching the trading post, Whiskey Jim swerved west. He showed up next with a large party of buffalo hide hunters in the panhandle. Most of them were to become famous and infamous in New Mexico a few short years later. Among them were Jimmy Carlyle, Billy Wilson, Beaver Smith, Pat Garrett, Jimmy Dolan, Hank Campbell and Bill Kuck.

They were hunting out of Bill Devin's camp in February 1877 when a band of 150 Comanche warriors struck them. Deciding then and there that he had had enough, Garrett pulled out for New Mexico with no more than a Sharps rifle and a frying pan tied on his saddle.

Photo furnished by the author

Socorro where Whiskey Jim's killer was hanged by a mob.

GREATHOUSE

By Maurice Kildare

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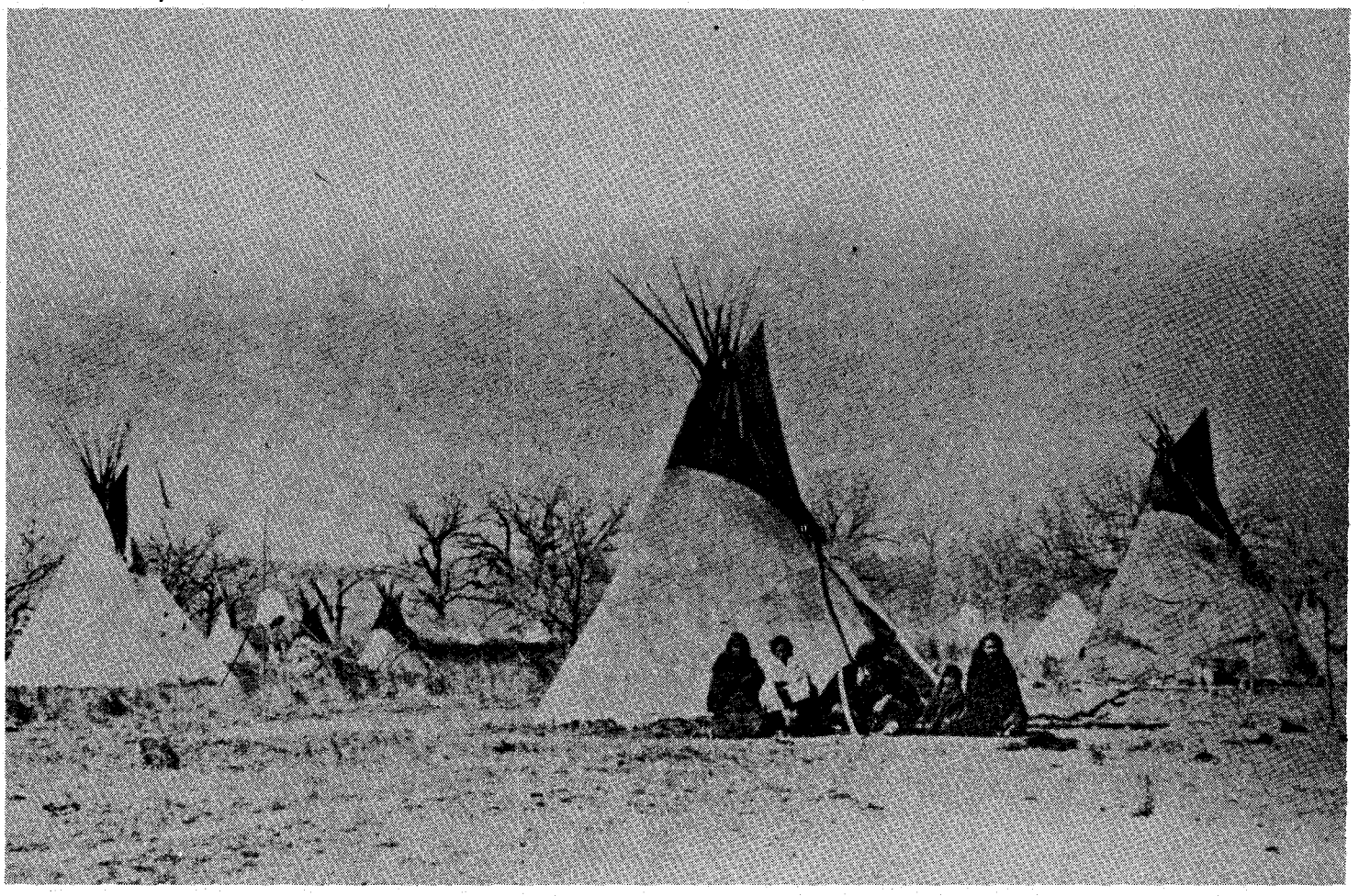
Photo furnished by the author



Comanche Indian camp. Whiskey Jim sold whiskey and guns to Comanches and other Indians of the southwest. Later he stole their ponies and finally fought them.

Led by Whiskey Jim and Campbell, the others fought off the Comanche raiders but had their wagons and supplies burned. They then pursued when the Indians fled.

The hunters soon lost the marauders' trail, but they came onto Comanchero Jose Tafoya. His wagons were loaded for contraband trade with renegade Indians.

Asked where he was to rendezvous with them, Tafoya refused to talk. They strung him up a few times with a rope around his neck before he confessed that his wagons and carts were enroute to meet some Comanches in Yellow House Canyon.

The hunters took what they wanted from the wagons, shot Tafoya full of holes, ran off his men and burned his entire outfit. In the opinion of buffalo hunters, cowmen and all others on the frontier a Comanchero (a trader doing business with that tribe and usually selling them arms and ammunition) was lower than a rattlesnake's belly.

The hunters proceeded to Yellow House Canyon where, on, March 18, they began a several days' battle with a contingent of Comanches and a small group of Apaches who had joined them.

Reinforcements came to the Indians, and on the fifth day the hunters were in a bad way against forty times their number. Several were killed and almost all the others wounded. They could not withdraw and flee because the Indians finally surrounded them completely.

In this desperate situation Whiskey Jim, himself wounded, led four others through the besieging lines to fire dry grass behind the Indians. This scheme succeeded, forcing them to retreat on one side.

The hunters then escaped south to Rath where they headquartered at the Reynolds and Company trading post. Despite his previous skullduggery there, Whiskey Jim succeeded in getting himself elected captain of a larger force of hunters.

He led them back north in pursuit of the Indians but failed to make contact. While returning to Rath from the upper panhandle they found a dozen Comancheros with their contraband loaded wagons on the Las Lagunas. Most were looted and the rest burned.

By this time Whiskey Jim had enough of Indian fighting and went on west into New Mexico. For awhile he loafed in Las Vegas, just looking around and sizing up the chances for making some easy money.

The Sante Fe trail town was filled with many badmen carousing in the dives that never closed day or night. Engaging in gambling for awhile, he started making it a business. In an argument over a poker hand on which he lost heavily, Whiskey Jim killed two tinhorn gamblers.

After another fatal shooting the local law, controlled by Mexicans, began taking a dim view of his too-ready gun. When he killed his fourth man, that was it.

Leaving Las Vegas hurriedly, he established a ranch in the lush grass country on the Pecos River at Oche de Mil Egre which was not far from Anton Chico. This was during the summer of 1879.

Able to buy only a few cattle he partnered with a Mexican cattle thief. The rustlers were split: Whiskey Jim keeping as his share those animals he was certain would pass the rebrands inspection. The Mexican took his away and sold

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them.

This was a slow way to get rich, so he was happy when the mild mannered, easygoing, ex-buffalo hunter Kuck showed up. He had considerable money, so the two became partners in the cattle business.

Going down the Las Vegas - Lincoln road they established a larger ranch, store and roadhouse at the foot of the Jicarilla Mountains north of White Oaks.

Both ranches became stopovers for wanted men on the dodge. Kuck was more of a silent partner than an active one. The aggressive Whiskey Jim went out to scheme and make deals that enriched them both fast.

He did not deal with minor outlaws, the poor ones with no money in their possibles sack. They were sent on their way, for the small timers were liable to bring lawmen in a hurry. Only the big operators were succored and hidden out.

His contempt for the amateur outlaw was great. This was displayed when John H. Mink and one of his Mexican vaqueros tracked twelve stolen mules to the Pecos River.

When told, Whiskey Jim laughed indulgently, saying, "Show me them mules tracks and you'll soon have them back."

Being an expert tracker, Whiskey Jim experienced no difficulty overhauling the thieves. The two with the mules were shot dead in a sudden foray and the mules recovered.

Despite being a shrewd judge of the outlaws he let hide out with him, Whiskey Jim made one mistake. Or maybe he was just careless. A man calling himself West Brown drove in fourteen head of Texas horses with a kid named Ike Snow.

W. H. Smith was foreman of the Stevens and Worsham ranch from which outfit the fine horses had been taken. Following the thieves' trail into New Mexico accompanied by John Farrington, Charles Goodnight's range boss, they quit it to ride into Las Vegas one April day in 1880.

Smith informed the county sheriff that he believed the stolen horses were on the Greathouse ranch at Oche de Mil Egre. The sheriff being unable to go along with them, Las Vegas police chief Lloyd Jarrett and Charley Taylor accompanied them there.

The four men sneaked in through the brush near the ranchhouse where they found Whiskey Jim and Snow digging a well. They got the gun drop, but while disarming them Brown opened fire from hiding.

Brown was the alias of Sam Stockton, the brother of Ike and Porter Stockton who were wanted in Texas for killing a ranger.

Farrington fell to one side as bullets whined around them. Two chunks of lead from his gun felled Stockton. Jarrett shoved a gun muzzle into the unarmed Whiskey Jim's back. While cursing the officer in a blue streak, he was used as a shield moving in to get Stockton's dropped gun.

Only twelve of the horses were recovered. The wounded Stockton and Snow were lodged in the Las Vegas Juzgado. Taken back to Texas, Stockton escaped jail in that state. He fled to Colorado where

Photo furnished by the author

Billy the Kid was a friend of Whiskey Jim and often stopped at his ranch.

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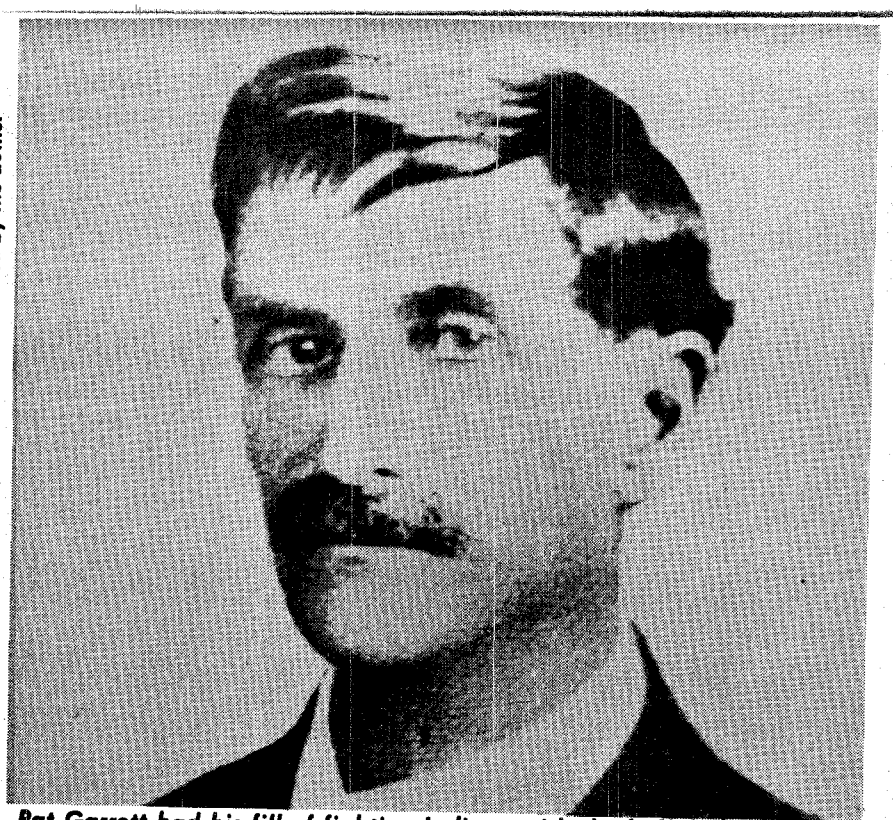

Photo furnished by the author

Pat Garrett had his fill of fighting Indians with the buffalo hunters and pulled out for New Mexico.

vigilantes later hanged him for a murder committed during a robbery. Young Snow drew a short penitentiary sentence.

Very angry because Jarrett came to his ranch, Whiskey Jim decided to kill him. One dark night he laid for him on *Sodomia La Calle de la Amargura* (the road of suffering and bitterness) fronted by most of the saloons, dancehalls, gambling dens and bordellos in the town.

Jarrett came walking along with two other officers whereupon Whiskey Jim opened fire from hiding. Missing the intended victim, he killed a policeman beside Jarrett.

Fleeing Las Vegas that night, he left the northern ranch in charge of a Mexican family and went south to the larger one. He was never more than suspected of killing the policeman, there being no evidence to tie him in with the night bushwhack.

That fall he bought a small band of horses and mules from Billy the Kid (William H. Bonney), selling them to freighters on the road. The Kid's gang, fleeing lawmen from one part of the territory to another, always stopped with Whiskey Jim.

This led to a trap by a posse on the cold morning of November 27, 1880. The gang, after carousing the previous day in White Oaks and shooting up the town, was pursued there by Constable T. B. Longworth.

The posse had occupied surrounding positions when the first man out of the house was freighter Joe Steck. Having stopped there overnight he set forth to feed his teams. Taken into custody, he told Longworth that the three outlaws wanted for shooting up White Oaks were inside the stone house with Greathouse and several other men.

He was sent back into the house with a note demanding the gang's immediate surrender. Whiskey Jim came back with him bearing the reply.

The Kid told the officers they could go enjoy themselves in Hades. Whiskey Jim told Longworth that Billy Wilson, not wanted for a serious crime, desired to give himself up.

If he tried it Wilson would be killed, so the Kid threatened. He must remain there with the rest and help shoot the posse to pieces. After discussing the situation with his men, Longworth decided that Jimmy Carlyle, a member of the posse and well known to the Kid and Wilson, could get the latter out of the house.

Disarming himself, Carlyle walked across the open ground and was admitted to the house. He first informed the Kid that this friend Whiskey Jim was being held a hostage for himself. Then he began trying to persuade them all to surrender and if not, to let Wilson go.

The gang had opened a couple of bottles of whiskey, and, while friendly and joking with Carlyle, they were in no mood to be persuaded into anything. When Carlyle admitted that Longworth carrid no arrest warrant for any of them, the Kid became incensed, playfully threatening to shoot him.

Carlyle had been inside the house some time when a member of the posse carelessly and by accident, discharged a rifle. The crash of the shot convinced the Kid that Whiskey Jim had been killed.

Carlyle, the buffalo hunter from the Great Plains, believed so too. The Kid's gang would surely fill him full of bullet holes, so he took a running jump towards an open window. He made it but the gang rushing to the wall fired through the opening and brought him to the ground dead. Afterwards the Kid, Wilson and Dave Rudabaugh declared that they shot to one side, but that the unfortunate Carlyle was zigzagging and one bullet struck him by mere chance.

The bunch then went through the same back window, dodged hot lead when they came into the clear and reached the barns. They saddled and mounted their horses, while the inept posse was held off, and escaped into the surrounding hills.

Kuck, who had been in the house with two freight train hostlers, now emerged and told the posse what happened. Wilson had gone along with the gang, sure that he would be shot by the posse on sight.

After cooking a belated meal with Whiskey Jim's generosity furnishing food, the posse departed for Jerry Hocradle's ranch.

Whiskey Jim and Kuck rode north to their other ranch and Las Vegas. The next day Deputy Sheriff John Hurley led a posse to the Jicarilla ranch from Lincoln and burned down all the wooden buildings (plank and logs) and the interior of the stone house and store.

On hearing about this deed Whiskey Jim told a reporter for the Las Vegas *Gazette* that the loss was about $5,500. He also said that outlaws, unknown to him, oftened appeared at his roadhouse on the freight road in the guise of regular, honest travelers. Billy the Kid he admitted knowing intimately, but as so many other New Mexicans he played a diplomatic course of keeping his mouth shut concerning the badly wanted young outlaw's activities and movements. To do less meant almost immediate death from bushwhack.

(continued on page 74)

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Hot Blood And Cold Steel

THE STORY OF JIM BOWIE

By Norman B. Wiltsey

The Bowie Knife became the favorite weapon of many frontiersmen who preferred it to firearms because as Jim Bowie put it, "it's always handy, always loaded." The first Bowie knife was designed together by Jim Bowie and an Arkansas knifesmith named James Black who modified Bowie's original design to create the new knife.

Created expressly to kill and promptly christened in blood after manufacture, the Bowie Knife has become a gory legend in history since the awesome two-edged weapon first appeared on the American scene nearly 150 years ago. Subject of many fearsome tales—some of them true—the sinister blade received its name from Jim Bowie, allegedly the greatest knife fighter of our turbulent early frontier era.

There is a great deal written about Bowie that is pure fiction but this one fact is unassailable: his knife was no doubt the bloodiest ever used in our violent history.

Many current historians rightly insist that much about the storied blade is obviously myth. They point out that knives similar to Bowie's were made in Europe almost 100 years before Bowie was born in Logan County, Kentucky, in 1796. Knife experts of today claim the concave shape of the top cutting edge of the Bowie is not good design.

But whatever their research discloses, virtually all historians agree that the day Bowie first blooded his weapon by killing three men in less than a minute, he ushered in the goriest era in knife fighting history. After luridly melodramatized versions of Bowie's brief, furious battle on the Southwest Trail to Texas were recounted in newspapers across the land, literally thousands of Americans started carrying the newly named Bowie Knife.

These heavy knives were used not only to butcher hogs and cut down small trees; they slit many a throat and split many a skull in the wild early days of this nation. They were carried not only by bearded frontiersmen but by city dandies who wore them sheathed in leather and silver scabbards. In many cities Bowie knife fighting was taught in schools much as ballroom dancing is today. The Bowie fighting technique was to thrust and parry much as in fencing. Raymond W. Thorp, in his book *Bowie Knife,* appropriately called it a "Knife Society".

The country was flooded with "Bowie knives" mass-produced in Sheffield and Birmingham, England, but cutlers who inscribed the weapons with what they conceived to be patriotic American slogans like: "Americans Can and Must be Ruled by Americans" and "Hot Blood and Cold Steel Will Defeat the Foe." The simplistic chauvinist slogans were invented in Britain to cash in on the surge of proud nationalism in the young United States and abundantly achieved their purpose. As one cynical English cutler put it: "The bloody Americans will buy anything that helps them believe they're heroes."

The Bowie craze lasted for years, and in the Civil War many Confederate soldiers were equipped with these tremendous 14-inch, two-pound knives for close-quarter combat when they lacked bayonets for their nondescript rifles.

Knives replaced pistols as the preferred method of settling affairs of honor when the duelists were really intent on doing each other in. Exactly how many men lost their lives in knife duels can never be tallied, but it is unlikely that any other knife was responsible for more violent deaths than the Bowie.

And yet the man who started this knife-fighting era was no roughneck or rogue, bur rather a soft-spoken, easy-going fellow who killed only in self-defense. Jim Bowie came from a well-to-do Southern family with an aristocratic background. It was his firm belief that a good knife had an advantage in a close-quarter fight over any pistol available in his day. And it was his continued insistence on knives as personal weapons that won his fame and gave his name to the Bowie knife.

Actually the knife should have been named the Bowie—Black knife, for it is questionable whether Bowie could have attained his fearsome reputation without the skilled craftsmanship of a frail Arkansas knifesmith named Black.

One of the early settlers in Hempstead County, Arkansas, James Black possessed a carefully guarded secret handed down from generation to generation in his family of expert knife-makers—a process or technique for tempering and hardening steel that invariably produced blades capable of maintaining a razor edge indefinitely.

In 1830, at San Antonio, Bowie heard of Black's wonderful knives from a traveler: "This hyar blade kin cut seasoned hickory for an hour—and then shave the h'ar from yore arm!" bragged an Arkansan in a tavern. Bets were made. The Arkansas produced the knife, and a block of sun-dried hickory from the buckskin bag at his belt—and won the bet hands down.

Bowie watched the proceedings with keen interest. Better than any man of his turbulent era, Jim understood

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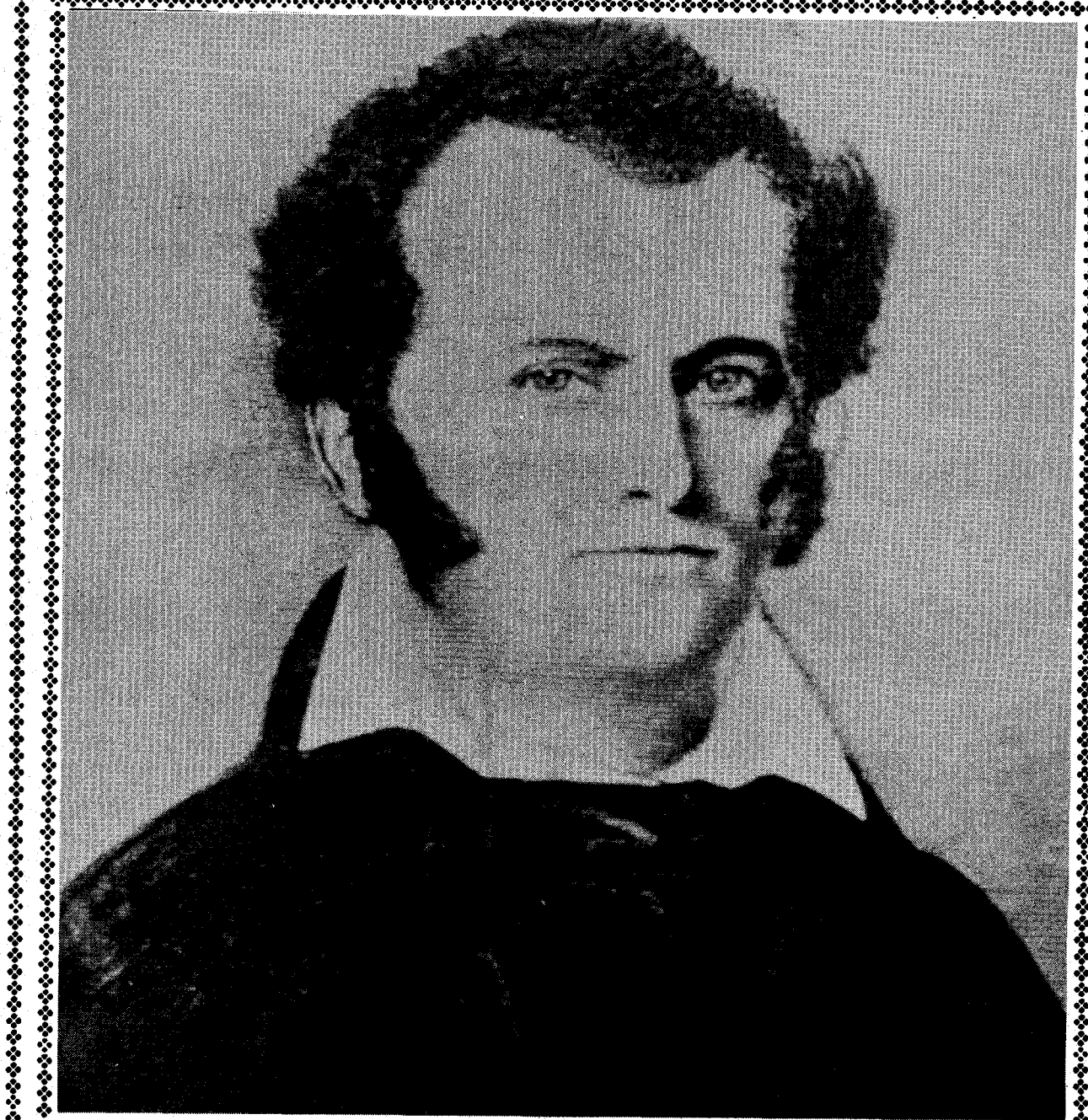

Rose Collection, Univ. of Oklahoma Library

Jim Bowie, tempestuous knife-wielding hero of the Southwest border. Together with James Black, an expert knife maker of Arkansas he "invented" a heavy 14-inch bladed knife which became known as the "Bowie Knife". With it in 30 seconds he killed 3 men who had attacked him on the trail. When asked why he preferred a knife to a gun he stated, "A knife ain't like a gun, it's always handy, always loaded."

the value of a knife capable of maintaining a razor edge through an hour's wood cutting. In the savage thrusting knife-fight, the blade that kept its edge longest could mean the difference between living and dying. Accordingly, in December of 1830, Bowie rode to Arkansas to visit James Black.

The tall Texan was impressed by the array of knives he found on display in Black's workshop, yet not entirely satisfied with their design. Utilizing a block of soft wood, Jim rapidly carved out a rough model of his ideal weapon. The cutler studied the model a minute or two, then "allowed as how" he could deliver the finished knife in 30 days when his current orders were completed.

When Bowie returned in four weeks, he found that Black had turned out two knives for his inspection. He had followed Jim's specifications exactly in making one of the knives: heavy 14-inch blade, single-edge with brass fighting guard on the back, hilt equipped with three-inch cross-guard, handle of seasoned black walnut in one piece.

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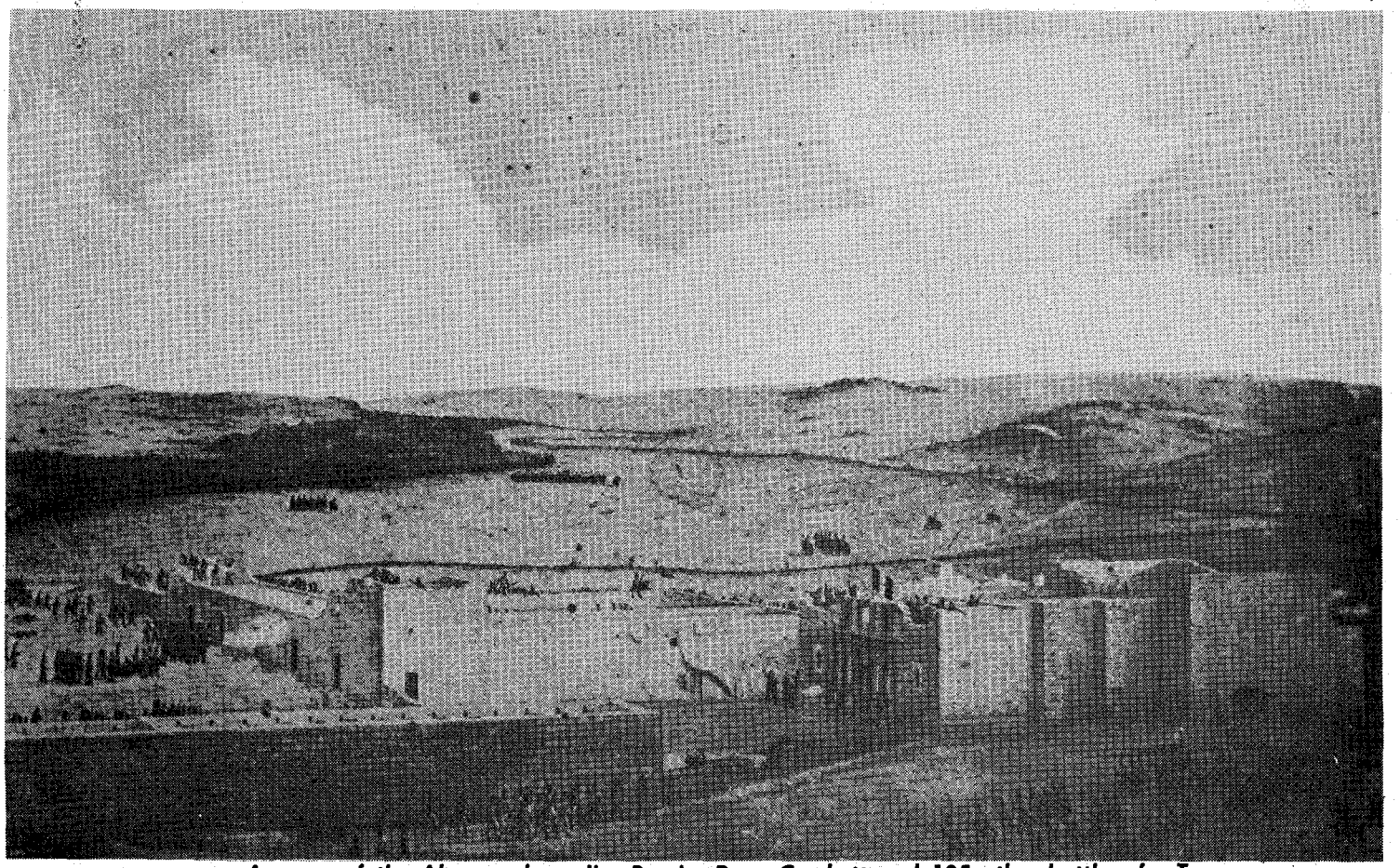

A scene of the Alamo where Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett and 185 other battlers for Texas independence met their death.

The cutler watched in silence as Jim carefully examined the first weapon. When he had finished his inspection, Black picked up the second knife and proffered it butt-first to his customer.

"This knife, Mr. Bowie, is an exact replica of the other *except for this.*" The knifesmith's long sensitive fingers caressed the shimmering blade lovingly. "Here, for the space of two and one-half inches from the curve of the point to the tip of the blade, the knife is double-edged. The fighting guard is retained for effective parrying; yet you have enough edge on the *reverse* side of the blade to inflict a mortal wound in combat."

Bowie accepted the knife, moistened his thumb with saliva and gingerly tested the edge on the reverse side of the blade. His deep-set gray eyes glowed as he looked at Black. "By God, sir, you've done it! This is the knife I've been looking years for. I'll take this one with me now. Make two more and send them along to me in San Antonio."

So the soon to be famous—or infamous—Bowie Knife was created; a joint product of Bowie and Black.

Bowie had been a mighty knife fighter since boyhood. Moving with his family to the bayou country of Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, around 1800, Jim grew up in a region where a boy learned to handle a knife early in life.

A wiry youth with lightning reflexes, young Bowie used an ordinary butcher knife to dispatch alligators he roped himself from his flat-bottomed *bateau.* When Jim wasn't "running the swamps like a wildcat" as his annoyed father often declared, he spent many hours whittling objects out of wood or throwing his knife at a mark. Unlike his brothers John and Rezin, he seldom carried a gun. Asked to explain his preference for knives, Jim hesitated only briefly. "I just don't feel comfortable without a knife in my belt," he shrugged. Thinking it over, he added: "A knife ain't like a gun—it's always handy, always loaded."

In the summer of 1818 Jim journeyed to Texas with his older brother, Rezin, to take a flyer in the illegal slave trade. The brothers visited the camp of pirate captain Jean LaFitte on San Luis Island (now Galveston). LaFitte had worked up a profitable business raiding slave ships—mostly those flying the Spanish flag—and reselling the miserable captives in his island stronghold to slave dealers, who in turn sold them to plantation owners throughout the South.

Crafty Lafitte welcomed the Bowie boys and quickly briefed them in the fine points of trafficking in "black ivory". Jim and Rezin worked out a slightly different angle to the racket. They bought the slaves from LaFitte at one dollar per pound, then sneaked them into the territorial limits of the United States by boat.

Here, taking advantage of a quirk in law, they turned the slaves over to a customs-house officer, representing themselves as "informers". The law rewarded them with an informer's fee of one-half the value of the slaves when sold by Government officials.

Naturally, the Bowies bought back the Negroes at the sale, receiving an official bill of sale granting them the right to market their human merchandise legally anywhere in the United States. In this manner, Jim and Rezin cleaned up $65,000 in three years and departed for Louisiana to invest their ill-gotten capital in land.

Jim Bowie proved to be a fast and daring operator in the fiercely competitive field of land

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speculation. He also entered into partnership with Rezin in the development of sugar plantations. The ambitious brothers installed the first steam mill of grinding sugar cane ever used in Louisiana. They eventually sold their interests for $90,000 when it became increasingly evident that each preferred to travel alone.

For all the big money that Jim Bowie handled he was often land poor between deals. Yet he always managed to swing a clever financing maneuver to prevent his going bankrupt until, in the summer of 1827, he found his credit so over-extended an official of the local Alexandria bank refused him a loan.

The banker—one Major Norris Wright—was unnecessarily tough about it; he bluntly informed Jim that because of his frenetic wheeling and dealing he was no longer a good financial risk.

Outraged, Bowie branded the Major a "damned Shylock." Wright — who prided himself on his lineage as a Southern aristocrat—rose in wrath from his desk and showed Jim the door, calling him an "insolent marsh rat" in the process.

An early duel seemed indicated after that exchange of insults, but oddly nothing happened until the participants met face to face on an Alexandria street a couple of weeks later. This time, after swapping a few racy epithets, the two men went into action. Wright drew a pistol and fired point-blank, wounding Bowie only superficially when the low velocity ball glanced off a silver dollar in Jim's pocket.

Bowie retaliated by flattening the Major with a single punch. He was dressed in "town clothes" at the time and not carrying a knife. Jim told the physician who bandaged his flesh wound, "If I'd been packing a knife, I'd have carved that ol' goat like a fat Christmas goose!"

That's the potentially explosive point at which matters stood when Bowie and the Major met again as seconds for different principals in a duel held on Vidalia Sandbar on the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River opposite Natchez on September 19, 1827. The duel itself was a farcical affair in which shots were fired but nobody hurt. The aftermath turned out to be sheer bloody horror.

Duelists Sam Wells and Tom Maddox, their honor vindicated by the harmless exchange of shots, had just met in the center of the field to shake hands when the smoldering feud between Major Wright and Jim Bowie exploded into lethal climax.

Colonel Bob Crain, the Major's sidekick, got off the first pistol shot and wounded Bowie in the hip. General Sam Cuny, Jim's companion, fired a bit too hastily and drilled Crain through his gun arm instead of hitting dead center. Crain reeled from the shock of the heavy ball but drew a second pistol with his left hand and shot Cuny through the heart.

Bowie, dropped to his knees by Crain's first shot, lurched to his feet and rushed stumblingly—his long knife a-gleam in his right hand. White-faced with terror, Crain struck Jim on the head with his clubbed pistol and knocked him down. Jim rolled over and started to crawl toward Crain on his hands and knees. Bob screamed, threw both his empty pistols at Jim and fled the Sandbar at a wild gallop.

Now Major Wright, belatedly getting into action, rushed up to finish Bowie off with his sword-cane. Wright got in one thrust, but the thin blade broke off in Bowie's chest when the Major tried to withdraw it for the deathstroke. Growling like a wounded bear, Jim caught Wright's hand and pulled him down within reach of his knife. One thrust, ending up in the churning twist Jim called his "butcher's special", and the Major was disemboweled and very dead.

All this gory action took place in the space of a few flashing seconds. Al Blanchard, another pal of the Major, now took shaky aim at Bowie with his pistol, hit him in the left arm. Bowie dragged himself to his feet and charged; the bloody knife snaked out, stripping the flesh from the bones of Blanchard's right fore-arm. Al howled in agony, clutched his blood-streaming right arm with his left hand and dashed for the river.

Bowie staggered after Blanchard, cursing. Blood clogged in Jim's throat; he retched, strangled, and fell unconscious. Doctor Cuny, a brother of the deceased general, left his brother's body to attend Bowie.

Six months after the brief, sanguinary affair on Vidalia Sandbar, hardy Jim Bowie was completely recovered and on his way to fresh adventures in Texas.

Riding down the old Southwest Trail to Texas after his visit with knifemaker Black in Arkansas, Jim Bowie rode unsuspecting into an ambush. Three knife-swinging desperadoes leaped at him from a thicket beside the trail. The highwaymen knew their trade; one man grabbed for the horse's bridle, the others closed in on both sides of the rider.

Bowie, in the first instant of the attack, recognized his assailants as henchmen of "Bloody Jack" Sturdivant, noted Natchez gambler and killer who had been permanently crippled in a knife fight with Him after a card game in which Jack had dropped a bundle of cash.

As always, when danger threatened, Bowie's conditioned reflexes automatically took over. Ducking forward along his horse's neck, he kicked one assassin in the face and knocked him spinning into the bushes. Momentarily safe from attack on that side, Jim whipped out his new knife and leaped off his horse.

The man at the horse's head dropped the bridle and came at him from the front. Jim went in low under his guard with a lightning lunge that left his dying victim groveling on the ground. Whirling, Bowie met another bandit rushing at him from the rear. Deftly the great knife fighter parried the thrust, turned the blade aside, and flicked the razor-sharp reverse edge of his own blade across the bandit's throat. The man dropped as if shot. Recovering from the boot in the face, the first thug came at Jim from out of the bushes where he had been knocked. He stopped short, horror-struck at the fate of his comrades, then turned and fled for the woods. Bowie overtook him in two strides and split his skull to the teeth with a sweeping overhand stroke from behind.

The Bowie Knife had killed three armed men in 30 seconds and the grim legend was born. Jim decried his new unsought fame. "Damn it, I'm no murderer!" he insisted to any who would listen. "Those paid killers jumped me and got what was coming to them. That's all there was to it." His explanation fell on deaf ears; the wild frontier had a new hero and didn't intend to relinquish him.

A happy marriage to a beautiful Mexican girl slowed Bowie down for two years, but by the summer of 1832 he was back in action leading a company of Texan volunteers in the capture of a Mexican garrison near San Antonio. Nothing came of this bold but premature bid for Texas independence. Jim was deeply disappointed at the failure of fellow

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Texans to rally to his support in an all-out war with Mexico to "wrest the territory from the tyrants' hands." "The time will come," he told them grimly, "When *all* Texans will fight together for liberty!"

Personal tragedy struck Bowie in June of 1833 when his wife and two children died of cholera. Heartbroken, Jim returned to Louisiana. But he could forget neither his personal bereavement nor the increasingly evident fact that his adopted and beloved Texas stood facing a fateful historical crisis and desperately needed his help. Jim was back in San Antonio by Christmas.

Momentous events move slowly; the hour of revolt awaited so eagerly by Bowie and other Texas patriots did not arrive until October of 1835. In an amazing battle at Mission Concepcion, Jim fought with Colonel Fannin and 92 Texas volunteers against 400 Mexican irregulars attempting to stamp out the insurrection. One hundred of the enemy were casualties at Mission Concepcion, while the Texans lost but a single man killed and six wounded.

Thirty days after the one-sided engagement at Mission Concepcion, Bowie led a small force of volunteers against a large force of Mexican irregulars approaching San Antonio. Again the enemy broke and fled before the deadly fire of the Texans' long rifles. Jim got a Colonel's commission for his cool leadership in that brief fight.

Mexican regulars got into action against the Texans late in February, 1836, when 5000 soldiers under General Santa Anna besieged the old missionfortress of the Alamo in San Antonio. Within the thick adobe walls of the Alamo, 187 Texans commanded by Colonel Travis awaited the final assault.

What manner of men were those who faced certain death against over-whelming odds at the Alamo, who are called heroes by some historians and fools by others? *They* called themselves Texans, those rugged frontiersmen defending the Alamo in that long-ago springtime in what is now the Lone Star State and the nation's largest after Alaska.

Actually many of them were Texans only in the intense and sometimes irrational love they bore their adopted country. Men from the Cross Timbers were there; silent, hard-eyed, dangerous men who had fled the law in other parts of America to seek sanctuary in Texas; home-spun clad swamp-runners from Bowie's old "stomping grounds" along Louisiana's Red River; soft-voiced, aristocratic adventurers from Virginia and Kentucky; lanky "b'ar" hunters from the mountains of Tennessee and the Carolinas.

Courtesy Univ. of New Mexico Press.

Rezin Bowie, older brother of Jim. Together they engaged in the nefarious slave trade during the 1820's and cleared $65,000. With their ill-gotten money they invested in land speculation and here their differing natures caused them to go their separate ways. Rezin to Louisiana as a business man, Jim to Texas to fight for Texas independence.

Differing widely in appearance, education and background, the doomed defenders of the Alamo were identical in one respect: they all had courage, misguided and illogical though it might have been. When Colonel Travis offered to let any man who wished go over the wall at night in an effort to escape, not a one stepped forward. From such fanatics the enduring mystique of American invincibility was derived.

Colonel Bowie, his hip broken in a fall from a scaffold, ignored the pain of his disabling injury to direct his men from a cot at the base of the inner wall. (Later, just before the final assault, he was removed at Colonel Travis's order to an inner room where he kept two loaded pistols and his long knife at his side in readiness for the last moments of the battle).

Colonel Travis shared Bowie's fatalistic view of the grave situation.

Trained soldiers composed the besieging force, complete with artillery and enginners. Earthworks were thrown up around the Alamo and pushed closer with every passing hour. Under cover of these fortifications and a steady artillery barrage, the Mexican troops moved forward inexorably. The Texas gunners replied only sparingly to

(continued on page 76)

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PIERRE LAVERDURE

Metis Wanderer of the Far West

By Rex Bundy

He was born to a Mandan Indian woman who married a French free-trader in 1793. In his lifetime he saw the United States grow from a small nation of a few states to a powerful giant. He lived for one hundred and eleven years, and he left his tracks all over the North American Continent.

From author's collection

Pierre Laverdure as he appeared in 1894 at the age of 101. He was born in a Mandan Indian lodge in 1793 and died at 111 at Hardin, Montana. His years were spent wandering the West as a fur trader and as a member of an Indian band.

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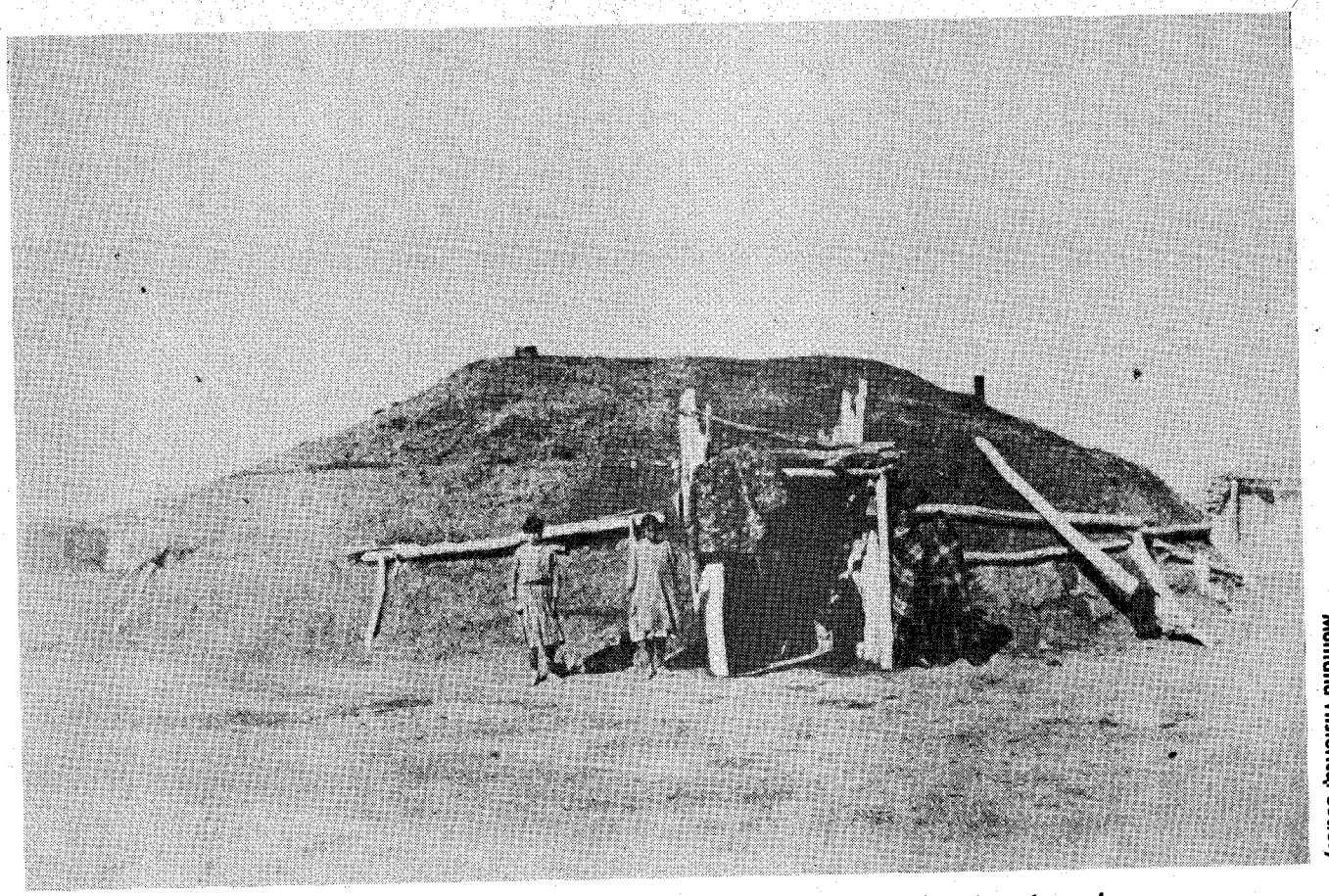

Montana Historical Society

A Mandan earth lodge at Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory. In such a lodge Pierre Laverdure was born in 1793.

For three quarters of a century, longer than a normal life expectancy today, Pierre Laverdure roamed the far West. During this time he answered to no man, but depended solely on the bounties of Nature and his own ability to wrest these from Nature's often tenacious grip. Only the encroachment of civilization slowed and finally halted his annual migrations over that vast land bounded by a line west from St. Louis, Missouri, to the mouth of the Columbia River, north from St. Louis to York Factory on Hudson Bay, then west once more to the mouth of the Frazier River in British Columbia. And each year some small portion of this vast area was marked by his footprints, the footprints of his pony, or the twin drag lines of his travois poles.

Pierre was born into that new race created on this continent by the fur trade — the Bois Brule. They are more commonly known as the Metis, and to the hard-nosed American pioneer as "breeds". But through their veins flow the blood of nobility, bourgeoisie, and plebian, mingled with every Indian tribe the fur traders encountered. Many of the Bois Brule followed the customs and way of life of their white forebearers, while some retained their Indian heritage. And Pierre was one who retained the Indian way of life even though exposed to the so-called benefits of his white heritage.

His birthplace was an earth lodge in a Mandan Indian village in 1793, and during his lifetime the United States grew from a few weak colonies to a mighty world power. He was a young man at the time of the War of 1812, approaching old age at the beginning of the Civil War, but lived to celebrate Dewey's victory at Manila Bay.

His father was Antoine Laverdure, a French free-trader out of Portage la Prairie who later became a minor official in the Hudson's Bay Company. His mother was a pretty Mandan maiden.

The first ten years of Pierre's life were spent in the custody of his mother, and from the time he learned to walk, he helped her in the garden patch that every Mandan woman had as a part of her many responsibilities. And in these small garden patches, called "nupkas", were grown the crops that had such an impact on the development of the fur trade and the extent of early western exploration.

At the age of eleven, Pierre was taken from his mother and established in one of the warrior societies. Here he lived for the following five years, learning the ways of the hunt and the methods of warfare. And in 1809, when Pierre was sixteen, his father returned to the village after an absence of three years. When he returned north, he persuaded Pierre to accompany him, the main persuasion being a new rifle and all its accompanying acouterments. And upon arriving at the Hudson's Bay Company post on the Assiniboine River, in what is now Manitoba, Pierre entered the service of the Company.

He spent the next five years traveling the trails and rivers of that vast area controlled by the Company. During this time, he learned the methods used by the traders in obtaining furs. He also learned the best means of pacifying the Indian tribes with which he would have carried on warfare had he remained an Indian warrior.

The free, untrammeled life of the "coureur de bois" appealed to Pierre's roving natures. Its numerous dangers and hardships were accepted by him as matter of course. And it was not until 1812, that Pierre's horizon - hungry eyes let him see the unnecessary discomforts of the life he led. And to remedy these, Pierre took his first wife, a pretty Cree maid, to cook his kills, tan his furs, make his clothes, and pitch his tepee.

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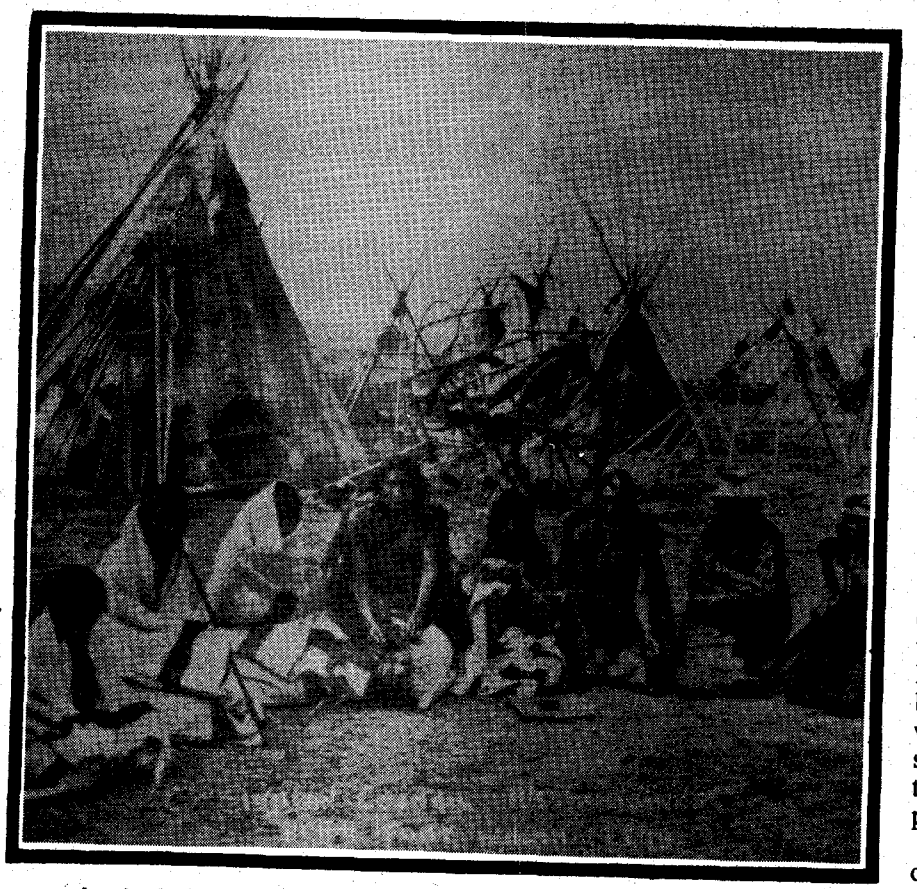

Montana Historical Society

An Assiniboine camp, 1878. A Metis cart is in the background.

In the late fall of 1814, Pierre took his discharge from the Hudsons' Bay Company and wintered in a Cree village near the headwaters of the Souris River in what is now Manitoba. His wife was contented with this arrangement, but Pierre grew restless as winter advanced. Perhaps it was the call of the open or the confinement of the Indian encampment that caused this restlessness. Whatever it was, it also caused the loss of his first wife and only child.

With the coming of green grass, Pierre and his family left the Cree encampment and started south for his homeland. And somewhere in what is now McHenry County, North Dakota, in that area enclosed in the broad loop of the Souris River, Pierre and his family were nearly ambushed by a war party of Sioux. Pierre could not fight the whole party, and the only thing he and his family could do was run. Pierre's horse was fast — his wife's too slow! And in his lone, desperate flight to escape, Pierre rode madly to the west hoping to find a Cree or Assiniboine encampment.

Early the following morning, he encountered a herd of buffalo that covered the prairie for miles. This was not a normal herd, but one that had been caught in a prairie fire. Some animals were merely singed, but others had huge burns on their legs and bodies, and these ran crazily across the prairie in their efforts to escape the pain. Others were blinded by the fire and smoke and walked over cutbanks and into grazing buffalo in their aimless wanderings. But to Pierre this was nearly as good as an Indian encampment for his purpose.

He rode a short distance through the herd, dodging the pain-crazed animals and avoiding the blind. Then turned to the south, confident the herd would cover all trace of his passage in case the Sioux were still on his trail. That afternoon, using the herd as a guard, Pierre slept while his horse grazed and rested.

On his arrival at the Mandan village, Pierre found his mother had existed only through the generosity of her relatives. His father had never returned in the six years Pierre had been gone, nor had he made any provisions for his wife's support. So Pierre immediately embarked on hunting expeditions to acquire the necessary buffalo hides to make a tepee and equip it. His mother, with the aid of her woman's society worked the hides and constructed the tepee. And not long after, Pierre and his mother were settled in their new home. Pierre took another wife, this time a Hidatsa girl from a village down river.

With the aid of the new wife, Pierre's mother stored numerous parfleches of pemmican and dried meat. But the ground pits used to store corn, squash, and other dried foods were not as full as usual due to a drought that hit the area in the middle of the growing season.

The drought not only ruined the crops but dried the matted prairie grass to the inflammability of gasoline. And the numerous dry-lightning storms of late summer and early fall caused a series of prairie fires that swept the country of graze and the vast herds of buffalo.

Winter hunts, which had always relied on these herds, produced only a few poorly-fleshed big horn sheep, elk and deer, and by spring the villagers were on short rations. This lack of food did not bother them because each spring, when the ice went out or shortly after, the Missouri River furnished them with all the meat they could consume or process.

This meat was from the thousands of buffalo that drowned up river. These were delivered to the Mandan's doorstep each spring without fail. The carcasses were bloated and rotten, but this was the Mandan's favorite food — the riper the better.

In the spring of 1816, when these animals failed to show in sufficient quantities to supply the village, scouts were sent up river to determine the reason. When the scouts returned with the news that a huge jam, approximately twenty miles upstream, had trapped hundreds of the dead animals, the village moved out in force to harvest this supply.

They set up their camp in the river breaks close to the meat supply, and they established outposts on the bluffs above. Scouts were sent out as an additional precaution against any surprise attack by enemies, and the remaining people started the salvage work.

Late the following morning, one of the far-ranging scouts returned and reported the presence of a camp of Sioux in a wide valley to the north. Even though this was a small camp of only ten lodges, it had a very large herd of horses that were in much better shape than the winter-starved horses of Mandans. And with the thought of acquiring this horse herd, the scout had ranged the country but could find no sign of other Sioux in the vicinity.

That afternoon a war party of forty, including Pierre, left the Mandan camp. They hit the Sioux camp the

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following morning at daybreak, killed all the men, captured the women, children and horse herd and, by using clubs for persuaders on the Sioux women, had the entire camp packed and moved to the Mandan camp by nightfall.

Pierre's share of the horse herd was eight fine horses. This raised his status considerably in the village because previously he had been a one horse man. And with this sudden affluence in horses, Pierre and his friends could now put in action the plan they had discussed of leaving the Mandan village for the life of the broad prairies.

As soon as the new grass of spring had strengthened their horses, Pierre and his family and six others left the Mandan village. The men of the other families were all from different tribes who, for some reason or other, had been left behind when their tribes finished their trading with the Mandans. All had taken Mandan wives but could not forget the wild, free, untrammeled spaces they had once roamed. They, like Pierre, had tasted the wild west wind and had traveled the broad reaches of the high plains and prairies where the only fences were the distant horizons and a man's ability.

The small band, traveling leisurely, took a course south by southwest following the directions of one of the men, a Crow, who had traveled the route previously. This man had told the others of a secluded valley where game was plentiful and ideal for a winter camp. And before the first snow, they were encamped on a tributary of the Little Missouri River near the Blue Mud Hills in what is now Montana.

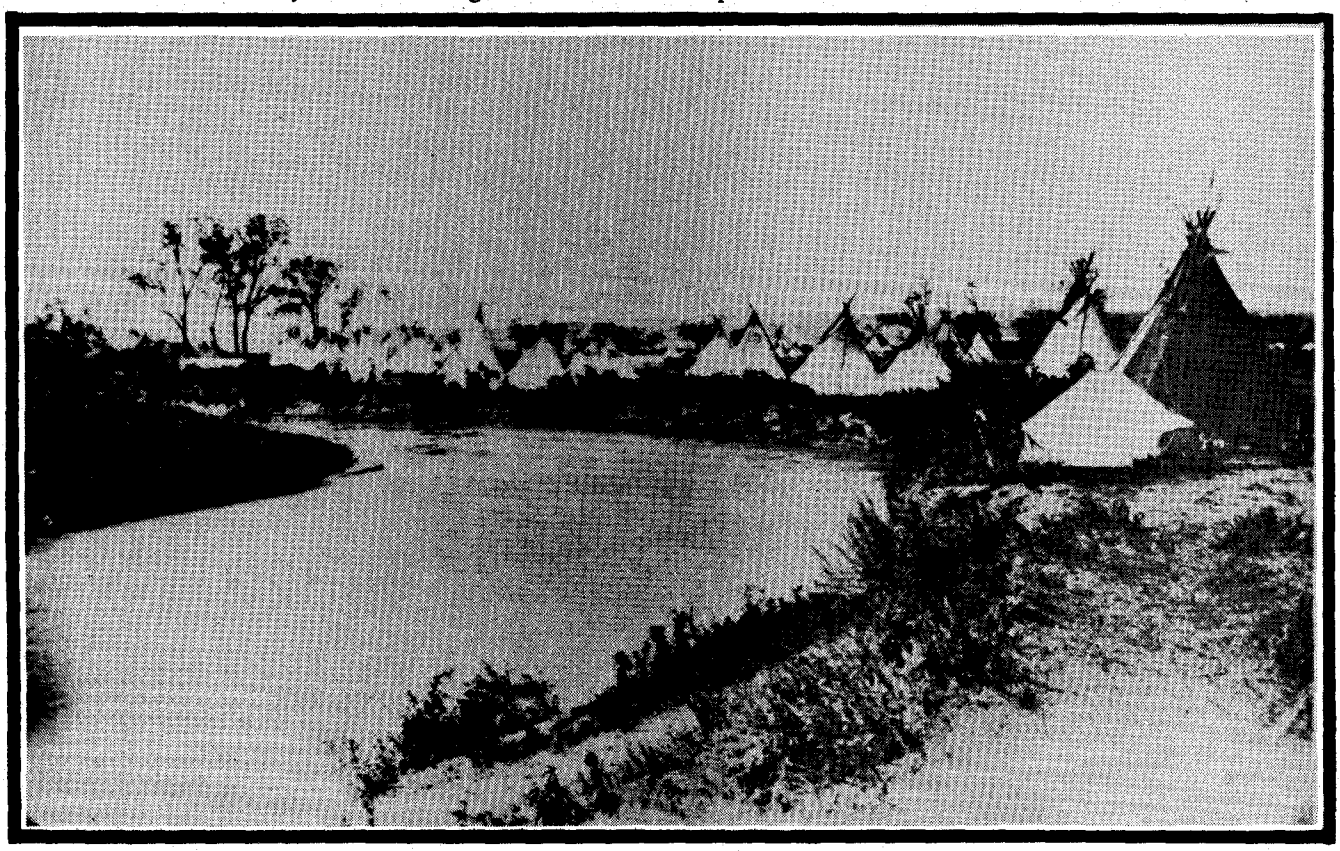
That winter was one of over-abundance. Hundreds of buffalo tongues hung by rawhide thongs below the smoke - holes in each tepee, drying and acquiring a flavor now unknown. Meat festooned the trees surrounding the camp. Tepees were crowded with parfleches of pemmican, and the women tanned more hides than the families could use.

Pierre, who knew the value of furs and robes due to his Hudson's Bay Company experiences, convinced the other men of the ease with which they could obtain all the white man's wonders by garnering the beaver of the surrounding watercourses. So that winter they marked the outlets of hundreds of beaver lodges. And when the ice went out in the spring, the men returned to the beaver lodges, drove stakes in the beaver's escape routes, ripped the tops off the lodges, and clubbed the inhabitants to death. Many beaver escaped, but the men garnered hundreds of pelts before the coming of the Green Grass Moon.

With the coming of green grass, the small camp headed north to the Yellowstone River to intercept any trading parties traveling up river. Scarcely three weeks after their arrival, they contacted a trading party of the Missouri Fur Company and traded all their beaver pelts and other furs, but they could not get rid of the majority of their buffalo robes. The traders considered these too bulky and heavy to transport. So Pierre decided to cache all the robes, plus a supply of powder and lead, and the old rifle given him by his father as he had traded his share of the beaver pelts for a new Hawkens.

Instead of returning to the Blue Mud Hills, Pierre and his small band followed the traders up river. At the mouth of the Big Horn River, the traders established a temporary trading post, but Pierre and his followers went on. And near the present site of Bozeman, Montana, they encountered a large party of Gros Ventre (Atsina), who were still smarting from a brush with the Crows. The Gros Ventre fell on the little party, and Pierre, who was bringing up the rear, was the only one to escape.

He fled back down river to the protection of the trading post. When he left there a few days later, he stole one of the fastest of the traders'



Montana Historical Society

Crow encampment on the Big Horn River, 1880. The wanderings of Pierre Laverdure took him to many such camps during his annual tracks.

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Buffalo herd in northern Montana around 1880.

Montana Historical Society

horses and headed directly to the cache, loaded supplies and the extra rifle on his newly acquired horse and headed south. He made his way to a Crow encampment and spent the following year in their company, and in that interval he took a Crow wife. And in the fall of 1819, Pierre and his family joined a party of traders returning overland to St. Louis.

Pierre was astonished by his first glimpse of St. Louis. The waterfront, warehouses, and Mississippi River steamboats fascinated him, but his wife was frightened by the town. After living on the outskirts for a time, she persuaded him to move the family tepee some distance to the west. But Pierre's fascination with town kept him there most of the time with just infrequent trips to his home. One such trip found his Crow wife and newborn son gone, along with all equipment. The only evidence of their being there was the trampled camp site, and a few discarded Crow moccasins.

Pierre lived the balance of the winter in a squalid cabin near the waterfront with two French - Canadian boatmen. He found this to be even more confining and filthy than the Mandan village had ever been, so even before spring he was making preparations to return up river. And it was during these preparations that Pierre met the girl that would be his next wife.

He found her behind the plank counter of a tiny shop that catered to the boatmen, trappers, and hunters. The stock was the cheapest available but was all some could afford, and Pierre's funds were running low.

The girl lived with her mother, a rum-soaked harridan of questionable antecedents, in two squalid rooms behind the shop. She was thought to be the bastard daughter of Jacques Claymorgam, who, at one time, had controlled the largest of the fur trade monopolies granted under Spanish rule. He was also noted for keeping a Negro harem within the limits of St. Louis and had bragged he was the bachelor father of four children.

The acquisition of this wife was not as easy as had been Pierre's previous ones, and it was not the prominence of the girl's father that caused the difficulty, it was the girl herself. She was beautiful, but a hell-cat, and an expert with a knife. This made no difference to Pierre; he was in love for the first time, and he knew what he wanted. The trouble was, so did Felippia, and when he asked her to go up river with him, she took after him with her knife and ran him out of the shop.

This setback to his romance did not stop his preparations for his journey. Instead of a one-man pirogue, he acquired a larger one and made sure there were enough supplies for two.

A few days after his spat with Felippia, he met her on the waterfront not far from where his pirogue was tied. His approach this time was simple. After she had passed him, with her nose in the air, he bashed her on the head with a chunk of wood, took her knife, tied her securely, loaded her in the pirogue, and paddled up river as fast as possible.

The first part of the trip was hectic for Pierre. Felippia deliberately tried to tip the pirogue over, and at night when her bonds were loosed, she would run. Pierre put up with this for four days, then cut himself a stout pole, and beat her until she promised to behave. After this, things went better, and their rate of travel increased with two on the paddles. Camp at night was more congenial, but Pierre did not return Felippia's knife. Not until they were in his home village did Pierre return the knife he had taken in St. Louis.

Felippia took to the life of the village as though born to it, and for five months things were good. Then she found out that Pierre was thinking of bringing another woman into their lodge, and she slashed him from cheekbone to jawline.

Pierre "lodge-poled" her good this time, being careful not to hit the swelling that indicated her first pregnancy. For days, she could scarcely hobble around the village, and as the days passed, her resentment grew, and in the sixth month of her pregnancy Felippia disappeared.

Perhaps it was the incident that occurred that day that convinced her the Mandan village was no place for a town girl. She, along with numerous other women, were in a plum thicket gathering the ripe fruit when another woman, also pregnant, discoverd a skunk. This animal was a food prize to pregnant Indian women, so she grabbed it by the tail and beat it on the ground until the animal was dead. She informed Felippia that she was going to eat it regardless of the stench, and offered to share it with her. Felippia lost her dinner and the plums she had been eating, and Pierre lost another wife.

In 1821 a Missouri Fur Company party arrived at the Mandan village on their way to establish a trading post on the Yellowstone River. They were also going to explore the fur possibilities of the Missouri River above the mouth of the Yellowstone, and Pierre was hired to guide this smaller party.

Near the mouth of the Milk River, in what is now Montana, the party participated in a battle between the Piegans and the Sioux. Pierre, with the hatred he bore the Sioux, insisted his party take the part of the Piegans, and the twelve guns of the white men took a frightful toll of Sioux warriors. This broke up the fight, and Pierre and his friends were greeted as brothers by the Piegan regardless of the fact they were the hated "Long Knives", as the Americans were known to the Blackfoot Confederacy.

When this party returned to the mouth of the Yellowstone, Pierre remained with the Piegans. With them he traveled to the Marias River, then on to Two Medicine River, and finally went north with them to a Hudson's Bay post in what is now Alberta. Here he renewed old acquaintances and traveled with a fur brigade to Lake Winnepeg.

At the fur post on Lake Winnepeg, he met the brother of his first wife, and returned with him to a Cree camp in the Cypress Hills in what is now Saskatchewan. Here he lived for a number of years, taking another wife and losing her through childbirth.

During the smallpox epidemic in 1836-37, Pierre was far to the west, in the very edge of the Rocky Mountains, living once more with the Piegans. This was a small encampment of only ten lodges and one of the very few in the Piegan country that did not suffer losses while the epidemic ran its course. It was at this camp that Pierre took his last wife.

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Green Snake Woman, a maid of fourteen winters and the only one of his Indian wives whose name is known.

Through the years this little band did all their trading with the Hudson's Bay Company in the north and never visited an American trading post. But in 1864, the peace of the little camp was disrupted by the news of a great influx of white men. Many white men had come into the country since the arrival of the first steamboat at Fort Benton in 1860, but this was a swarm.

Pierre had told his family about St. Louis, and to satisfy their curiosity, he took them south to show them some of the wonders of the white man's world.

They visited the town of Fort Benton and marveled at its size, and they were told of other towns farther south where the greatest concentration of white men had occurred. So the little family traveled on and finally arrived at the bustling town of Virginia City, Montana Territory.

Pierre could scarcely believe his eyes at the size of the town that had grown in the Piegan country. He was also astonished at the sight of white men scrabbling feverishly in the small creek that ran through the valley, especially so, when he found it was the yellow metal they sought, the same metal he had seen shining on the bottoms of numerous streams across this land.

For the next six years, Pierre became a miner. This in the sense that he, too, searched for gold. He and his family traveled the country gleaning small bags of gold from various streams. With this gold they had all the luxuries of the white man's goods, plus the bounties of Nature that are lavished on those who know her ways. But by 1870, the white men had spread to every creek that Pierre had visited.

Shortly before her death in 1872, Pierre's wife drew a map on buckskin and gave it to him. This map was only mentioned once, and that was when Pierre told his white friend, William "Bow" Bowman, that he had had a map of a fabulous gold source but had lost it. This was in 1893, when Pierre was one hundred years old, and not too much attention was given to his stories. But, not long after his wife's death, Pierre disappeared for three months leaving his children in the care of an old woman in a camp on the Marias River. And when he returned for them, his affluence was noted by many.

He became a real wanderer in his old age. Much more so than previously because he was a Bois Brule, on of the landless ones, and his name appeared on none of the reservation rolls.

With him traveled his only surviving child, a son, with a wife and child of his own. In their travels, they picked up other indigenous people of their race and in this manner accumulated a small band of followers.

This little band traveled the country, living off the bounties Nature could still provide for those who knew where to look and purchasing those they were unable to obtain from their land by using Pierre's gold.

In 1878, Pierre's son and daughter-in-law were killed while returning to their camp from the cantonment newly established by General Nelson A. Miles. The murders were committed by a drunken buffalo hunter who liked the looks of his son's wife. When Pierre was informed of the happening, the only thing he wanted to know was who had been responsible. The killings had been witnessed by a Crow Indian who pointed out the murderer to Pierre a few days later.

Although 85 years of age, Pierre watched his chance, and shortly after the buffalo hunter disappeared. In his extreme old age Pierre admitted he had killed the man. He hid his body by dumping it under a cutbank and breaking the lip off the bank which covered it completely.

For the following five years Pierre and his little band wandered the country. They lived off the few buffalo missed by the buffalo hunters and other game that had not been crowded from their land by the advance of civilization. But the little band slowly deteriorated, and Pierre's funds dwindled. Finally there were none left but Pierre and an old man and his wife. These two old people died in their camp on the Big Dry in the winter of 1883.

In the fall of 1884, Pierre arrived at the Crow Agency near present-day Hardin, Montana. With him he had five horses, and two of these were heavily laden. At the Agency he met the Crow who had befriended him five years earlier and struck a bargain with him. The bargain was that he, Pierre, would pay the man so much a year for the privilege of living with, or near him.

Pierre insisted on living in the old way and would not live in the cabin made available, so a tepee was constructed of canvas instead of the buffalo hides of the old days. In this Pierre lived for the next ten years until 1894, when he moved into a new cabin built for him by his Crow and white friends. In 1896, at the insistence of his friends, a young Crow couple moved in to take care of him.

Pierre's health declined rapidly in the following eight years and in 1904, the last summer of his life, he was deaf and nearly blind. But he was still impatient with confinement indoors and begged to be taken out on the prairie where he could smell the west wind, and feel the warmth of the sun. That winter the old man felt the call of the open country more strongly, and all he could talk about was the open sky, the broad sweep of the prairies, the smell of the west wind, the warmth of the sun, and, the first blizzard of winter.

Pierre sat by the fire one dark, stormy day, the last day of his life, feeling the first blasts of the blizzard's wind hurling itself against the walls of the snug cabin. While he sat, he perhaps daydreamed of old victories in war, the days of the hunt when the buffalo blackened the plains, and of old friends so long departed their faces had grown dim in his mind's eye.

The storm grew more violent as darkness fell, and shortly after the lamps were lighted the old man retired to his room. The others went about the evening's business, but they looked in on him just before retiring. He seemed to be resting well, but, when everyone was asleep, Pierre felt his way to the door and out into the storm.

Pierre was not missed until the following morning, and they found him huddled on the prairie, dead from old age, cold and exposure. He was wrapped snugly in a blanket of snow that had been tucked around him by the west wind he had loved so well.

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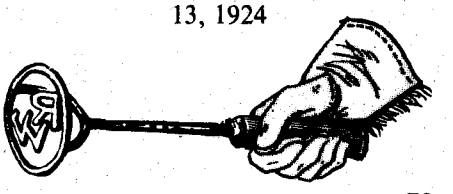

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JIM GREATHOUSE

(continued from page 62)

From that day on Whiskey Jim seems to have faded into oblivion, because of the general excitement and pursuit of the Kid all over New Mexico Territory, amid the rumors that he had gone to Mexico.

Remaining at the ranch on the Pecos River, Whiskey Jim was often seen in Las Vegas. He gambled and drank very little, seeming to be biding his time until something else developed.

Pat Garrett, the former buffalo hunter whom he had known in the Texas panhandle, who moved on when the going with Indians became tough, had been elected sheriff of Lincoln County for the sole purpose of removing the Kid from circulation.

In the spring of 1881 Whiskey Jim wrote a brief letter to the Kid that was left at Fort Sumner drop, warning him to leave the country. Somehow this letter fell into Garrett's hands. It was a lead to the fact that the Kid came into Fort Sumner periodically to visit friends, attend the balls and have a general good time. Garrett laid his plans accordingly to wind up the infamous career of the Kid.

Although he had plenty of money, Whiskey Jim went to work for cattlemen Stapp and Nelson as a blind. Just why has never been explained, except that the two cowmen were close friends and trying to protect him from onerous charges to the south.

On March 1 in Anton Chico, Barney Mason, Garrett's brother-in-law, arrested him on charges of being an accessory to the murder of Carlyle. Taken to White Oaks for a hearing before a Justice of the Peace, he was quickly released on a cash bond of $3,000 which he put up himself. The wolves were after him, and this may have had much to do with his later actions of going farther afield.

It was hoped that he would leave New Mexico, but Whiskey Jim was quite aware that the preposterous charge would be thrown out of district court when it came up.

Buying a large number of wagons and teams, he entered the then very lucrative freighting business. He hauled from Las Vegas to White Oaks, to Socorro and to mines in the Black Range. He was now in a completely honest business and thrived.

It was reported in the Las Vegas *Gazette*, May 19, 1881. "Greathouse is regarded as an honest man and any who have freight to be taken to White Oaks and elsewhere should make terms with him."

The business gained him considerable standing in the public eye. Yet he was still far from being reformed from the outlaw, frontier years that had vanished. Once his business was established on a remunerative basis, he turned it over to the management of a capable man. Then, unable to quit stealing cattle, he went back to doing so.

His carefully selected expert thieves were posted all over the country. They rustled a few head at a time, pushing them quickly to secret holding places. Whiskey Jim and another bunch of clandestine riders then removed them for sale in Las Vegas, White Oaks, Fort Stanton, Socorro and in the mountain mining camps.

As thefts and sales increased in volume he turned that end of his business over to trusted men. That winter his next moves were to sell wagon loads of beef in the towns instead of to slaughter houses on the hoof.

Seldom did an officer bother to ask him about brands on the hides. If one did, his stock reply was, "Ride out to the ranch and look at them." By then Greathouse was a large cattle owner, running several brands.

Only once did other outlaws try to cut in on his business which he controlled with an iron hand. One October day three rode into his night camp on the Pecos intending to give him warning that they were about to start selling beef to the mining camps. This was a most profitable trade. Hardly had they started telling him to keep out of certain towns when he came up with a lead and smoke spouting six-shooter.

One fell dead, a second was wounded and the third threw his palsied hands into the air. He was allowed to ride out with his mortally wounded companion who was undoubtedly buried in a sandhill.

One of Whiskey Jim's butcher shop customers in White Oaks, buying exclusively from him at a cheap price, undercut all his competitors. Another informed Deputy Sheriff William H. Hudgens that the beef came from Whiskey Jim.

Forming a posse of eight men,

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Hudgens rode north to the ranch which had been partly rebuilt after the burning. Kuck was there and amiably agreed that they were welcome to search the premises. No beef hides were found that bore any other owner's brand. What Hudgens could not know was that by then Whiskey Jim was buying butchered beef from rustler gangs. They did the slaughtering and delivered the quarters to the ranch, being paid after the beef was sold. Whiskey Jim was a joker who never took a chance on losing a dime.

Over at Bear Springs, running cattle in the Gallinas Mountains was the job of notorious Joseph (Joe) Fowler who boastfully claimed to have killed fourteen men. His nearest neighbor was another cattleman, C. F. Blackington, who would soon become the county sheriff. Fowler had been losing cattle over a period of several months. For some reason he accused Blackington of being the thief.

On December 15, 1881, Fowler and his foreman Jim Ike cut the trail of forty rustled steers. They followed it into the mining district of Georgetown, arriving just after they were sold to a slaughter house.

The rustlers were identified as Jim Finley and Jim Kay. They were former cowboys for Blackington. Fowler did not know that they had quit their jobs a couple of weeks before. They were traced from town to Bert Shaw's ranch where Whiskey Jim happened to be present.

Fowler had an unsavory reputation for shooting victims in the back from ambush. Knowing this, Finley and Kay lifted their sixguns, prepared to shoot it out on the spot. Fowler and Ike were caught cold and surely about to be killed.

Whiskey Jim started at the tableaux in astonishment. To him Fowler appealed in a shaky voice before guns blasted lead.

He asked quickly, "Hey, what the hell's wrong with these guys?"

"What's up?" Whiskey Jim asked Finley and Kay.

Finley replied, "This bastard was snaking his rouser from the holster as soon as he hit the ground from his saddle. If he wants a shooting, we'll accommodate him!"

"I, uh, just killed a man over at Socorro," Fowler lied. "Guess I'm a mite nervous and imagined these boys were after me."

"You shouldn't be sneaking in on people," Whiskey Jim replied. "It ain't noways the right thing to do."

Knowing that he was still in a shooting situation, Fowler began building up to Whiskey Jim. Afterwards he boasted that he used guile, knowing that Whiskey Jim bossed the gang preying on cattlemen's herds.

Fowler, a bushwhacker, had never killed an antagonist in a fair fight. He wasn't just about to brace Whiskey Jim face to face.

So well did Fowler smooth over the incident that Whiskey Jim rode along with him and Ike when they left Shaw's ranch. Finley and Kay followed close behind them.

At the Point of Rocks the entire party pulled up and ate a meal of cold grub carried in saddle bag pockets.

During this halt Finley got the opportunity to whisper a warning to Whiskey Jim, "Twice I have seen Fowler start to lift his gun on you when your back was turned. Watch him because he's out to kill you."

Whiskey Jim knew all about the often drunk Fowler's inclination to shoot someone in the back. Therefore it seems odd that, sided by Finley and Kay, he did not handle the cold-blooded killer when the final showdown came suddenly. All three paid for this mistake with their lives.

Only Fowler's story was accepted by investigating lawmen. According to him they were preparing to mount after partaking of lunch when Whiskey Jim turned on him holding a levelled gun.

He allegedly shouted, "I know your game, Joe! It won't work with me."

Fowler claimed that he was forced to draw in self-defense and killed Whiskey Jim with one bullet. His second dropped Finley dead. Ike in the meantime had killed Kay.

No one in New Mexico believed the shootout occurred that way. It was certain that in some way Fowler and Ike bushwhacked them. When lawmen went out for the bodies it was found that Whiskey Jim, then only twenty-seven years old, had been shot twice. One bullet went into the back between the shoulder blades, the second through the right side when he must have been turning about to face his slayer.

In no other way except by trickery could Whiskey Jim have been killed.

After Fowler's death a short time later, Ike gave another version. He said that when they started mounting up to leave the Point of Rocks, Whiskey Jim carelessly turned sideways to fork his saddle. From behind his horse, awaiting the opportunity, Fowler leveled his sixgun over the saddle and thumbed off two shots. Wheeling, he let Finley have it. Both rustlers were then shooting wildly at Fowler and Ike killed Kay.

Whatever happened, the putrid if not infamous career of Whiskey Jim was brought to an abrupt end by a cold-blooded, wanton bushwacker.

Continuing his murderous ways the night of November 6, 1883 in Socorro, Fowler engaged in a self-made argument with one of his few remaining friends, Joseph E. Cale.

Cale was a mild little man and never carried a weapon of any kind. When he tried to withdraw, saying, "Joe, we'll talk it over later," Fowler suddenly lost his mind.

Drunk, he pulled a Bowie knife and stabbed his friend to death before bystanders could throw him to the floor. When they did, he was held there until officers arrived to haul him off to jail.

The wanton murder enraged the citizens of Socorro. He was subsequently convicted and sentenced to hang. But the local citizens could not wait that long to see justice done.

More than 100 masked men took him from jail the night of January 22, 1884 and hanged him to a cottonwood tree.

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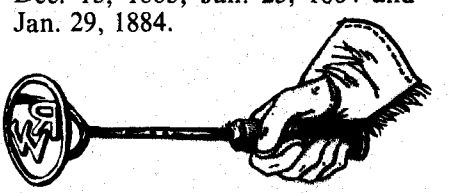

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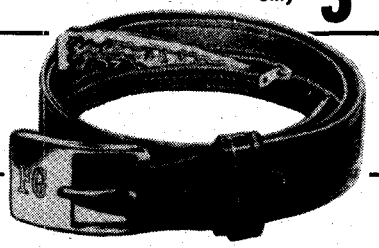

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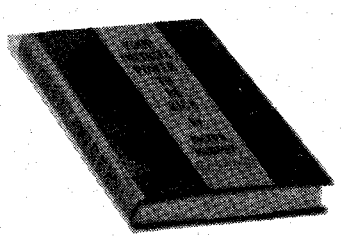

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(2) how a poverty-stricken couple received $10,000 "out of the blue" in response to their request (p. 25)

(3) how a man was able to triple his income in three months with a certain 28-word prayer that takes only ten seconds to repeat (p. 98)

(4) how L.T. used a one sentence prayer to rise from a job as an office boy to the owner of a 50 million dollar company (p. 178)

. . . or explain any one of the scores of wonderful things that happened to people who used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques!

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conserve ammunition for the last desperate defense.

The gray dawn of March 6 signalled the end. After more than a week's siege, the Mexican commander gave the order to charge. Davy Crockett, at the picket stockade outside the main wall, spotted the enemy forming for the attack and warned his comrades inside the mission with a piercing Comanche war-whoop. The Mexican buglers replied with the blasting notes of *El Deguello,* the No-Quarter call that literally means throat-cutting.

The assault was made with smart military precision by four columns, one to each side of the mission quadrangle, each supplied with axes, crowbars, and scaling ladders. These combat troops were ringed by cavalry, not only to prevent any attempt at escape by the Texans but to turn back any soldier who might choose to run instead of fight. They were not needed; Texans and Mexicans fought with equal valor.

The charge began with dash and precision, then wavered and broke in the face of the Texans' cannon fire and the deadly accurate fusillade of the long rifles. Twice the Mexicans were driven back with shattering losses before the third wave of assault troops reached the walls under the muzzles of the cannon and mounted their scaling ladders. They were shot off the ladders, slugged off with rifle butts to fall screaming on the heads of the soldiers below — but still they kept coming on.

In half an hour from the time of the first assault, the enemy had gained the walls. Hand - to - hand fighting now — clubbed rifles, swords, knives, fists. Colonel William Barrett Travis was killed beside his cannon; Davy Crockett fell at the picket stockade to which Davy and his sharpshooting "Tennessee Boys" had been assigned. Jim Bowie died in his inner room after emptying his pistols into the first Mexicans to crash in upon him. Legend has it that, crippled as he was, he rose from his cot and pitted his knife against the Mexican bayonets until the end. (Considering the fact that Jim was suffering from a debilitating fever in addition to his broken hip, this version is probably apocryphal).

The few Texans surviving the initial assault retreated into the

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chapel. Major Robert Evans had seized a torch to fire the powder magazine when he was shot down, ending the unequal battle.

General Martin de Perfecto Cos, second in command to General Santa Anna, seething at the heavy casualties his troops had sustained — some estimates run as high as 2000 dead and wounded — ordered the bodies of the gallant *Tejanos* dragged to the center of the plaza and burned. Jim Bowie was burned along with the others — and the accursed knife of *El Diablo Americano* was thrown into the fire with him.

Today, the plaza of the Alamo is a hallowed shrine for all Texans and a place of historical interest for tourists from around the world. The names of the 187 heroes are imperishably inscribed on a tablet of bronze and mounted on a monument for all visitors to read and ponder.

Santa Anna attacked, defeated and massacred Colonel J.W. Fannin and his small force of volunteers at Goliad, southeast of San Antonio on the San Antonio River.

On April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston with about 800 Texans shouting "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" surprised General Santa Anna with some 1600 troops at siesta time at San Jacinto near Houston, killed 630, captured 750, including Santa Anna himself. The smashing victory assured independence for Texas from Mexico.

Ten years later, in the Mexican War of 1846-48 the twin battle cries electrified the Texas contingent of the victorious American forces.

Texans have never forgotten them, nor the brave men who died at the Alamo and Goliad.

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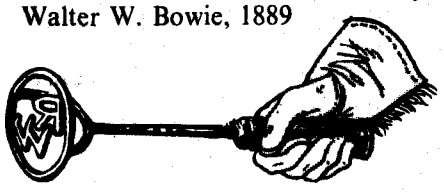

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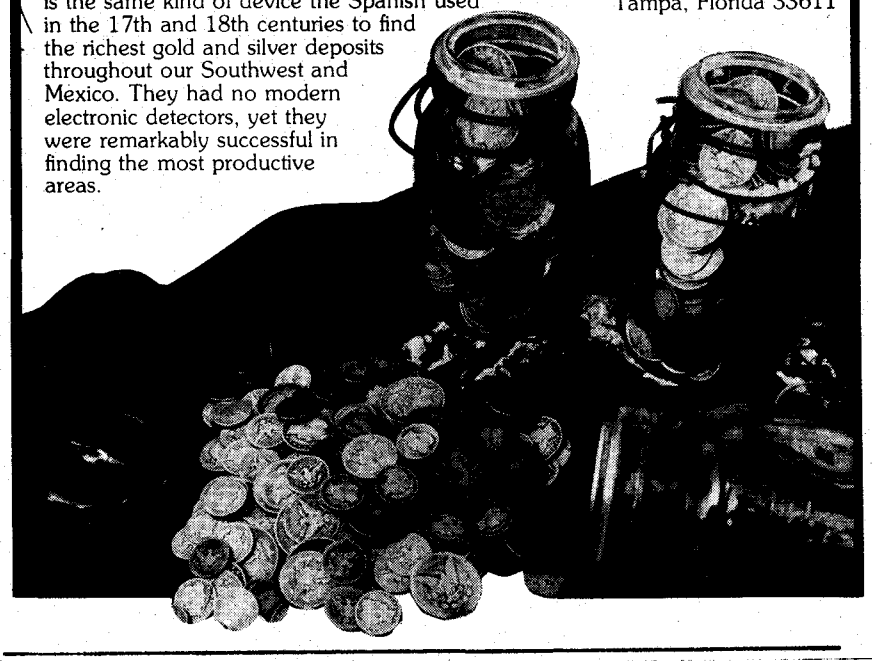

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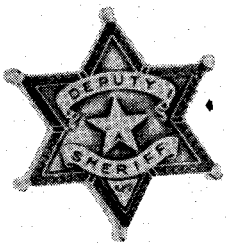

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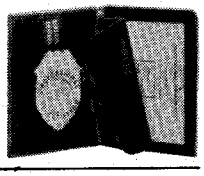

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son, not even a pair of blatant barbers, ever tried interrogating that tight-lipped sheriff about his business.

I heard some rumored names of various Slaughter casualties after I had gotten acquainted around Tombstone! "Shiney" Brown, said to have been a widelooper from Indian Territory. Memphis Mike, fugitive wife-killer from Tennessee. Fargo Tim, who'd gotten his "handle" from alleged robbery of Wells-Fargo express safes. J. Q. Pulley, horse thief and so it was said a one-time apprentice of the expired James Gang of Missouri.

There was a whole raft of dealers in cattle, other peoples' cattle, from either side of the border. "Apache" Valdez, sorry son of a Mexican father and an Indian mother. "Tommy Buckshot," run off the ranges of Texas and Arkansas finally to face stronger ammunition and a swifter aim in Arizona. Simon Rodriquez, sometimes anglicizing his name to Rogers, burning and blotting legitimate brands in the glow of a dozen crooked brands.

These now are all Arizona history of an unrecorded kind. You won't find the circumstances under which they vanished listed in any archive. Whenever John Slaughter returned from one of his scouts, one or more undesirables would be numbered among the permanently absent.

No grand jury ever asked John Slaughter about these missing ones. Nor any citizen. Within that era of not-too-formal justice, all law abiding people were just glad they were gone.

Tombstone's best historian, Walter Noble Burns, estimated that John Slaughter's shotgun personally accounted for 28 sorry drifters. Within our day of swift communication, of excellent roads and high powered transportation, his rough-and-ready sort of unilateral jurisprudence wouldn't go. Nor could I countenance it as a judge within this modern border area of Texas and Mexico.

But the Slaughter "outlaw cure" must be evaluated within the same context as the vigilante committees of early day California and Montana, or the anti-horse thief organizations that hanged "bridle boys" peremptorily in Texas, Wyoming, and most other Western states. The

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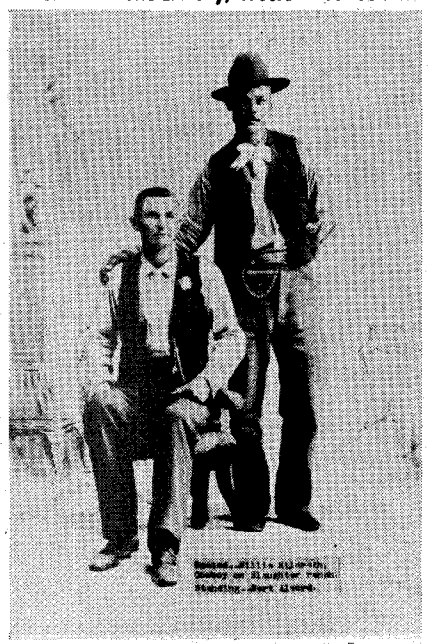

Billy Hildreth, cowboy on Slaughter ranch who sometimes performed lawman duties, and Burt Alvord, a Slaughter deputy who turned renegade and became a notorious outlaw.

frailer the structure of civilization, the more that citizens will fall back upon their own basic honesties and their own native folkways to protect themselves against the devious and the ornery, the bully and the bandit.

John Slaughter retired as sheriff of Cochise County in 1891. Carefully he had arranged his records and official papers for his successor. When it came to preserving valuable memorabilia, the man was as meticulously neat as he forever was about the clothing that he wore. He liked tidiness whether on civic or personal levels.

Many other Western lawmen would have served much longer during all the stresses and upheavals of a changing region. Figures like Texas-California officer Ira Aten or Oklahoma-Kansas marshal and sheriff Bill Tilghman would wear badges of one or another jurisdiction for most of their lives. The contributions of these two and others like them are immeasureable.

Perhaps no badge wearer accomplished more within just a few years than this quiet, small man whom I would know for too short a friendship during his waning years and my beginning ones.

I remember a day when he asked me to join him for an automobile ride into Tombstone. He parked the car briefly before the old Cochise County courthouse before a certain window.

"There, Mr. Baird," he informed me, "is the sheriff's office." For a moment I saw those coal black eyes flare. "That's where I hung my hat."

In two sentences that were masterpieces of understatement, he had defined his own epic. I realized it would be useless to press him for further details. For his life had always been lived by the deed and the example rather than by the gesture and the boast.

Yet if stones could talk, those weatherbeaten ones of that venerable old building could add many postscripts to the epic—

Many unsavory characters including outwardly respectable ones were told by the blunt Old Western sheriff to "hit the road" or else. And as Arizona writer Maurice Kildare has commented, "for every desperado that John Slaughter moved out, a hundred desirable settlers could move in."

He doggedly kept functioning in spite of sometimes uncertain health. In 1887, a crucial year in that struggle, John Slaughter came down with an often fatal disease: cholera morbus. But he fought off death as bravely as he did sidewinders and tinhorns to ride once more after those who didn't qualify for civilization. Only his weakened physical condition, it is said, caused him to decline the Democratic renomination for a third term in the general election of 1888. Bisbee has long since superseded Tombstone as the seat of Cochise County.

The county's present day citizens have a normal respect for judges and juries and for that whole texture of legal processes and principles that make up the body of American law.

All of this is one legacy of John Slaughter. Another is the still existing cooperation between policemen on both sides of the border.

During his four years as sheriff, Slaughter worked out an informal agreement with his friend, Captain Emilio Kousterlitzky, Mexican Rurales. Under that code, scaled with word and handshake, Arizona officers could pursue border scum into Mexico without being considered foreign invaders. Mexican lawmen could cross over into American territory and receive cordial cooperation.

By this precedent, American border officers today are able to exchange information and other data with what is now Mexico's Federal Judicial Police.

John Slaughter was still maintaining close relationships with

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lawmen from the adjoining Mexican state of Sonora when I knew him. I sometimes saw Mexican officers along with American ones at those ranch gatherings.

Sometimes, prosecutors and other law enforcement officials of either country were there. Now and then, along with distinguished other guests in every walk of life, I would say howdy to another old ex-sheriff, Carl Hayden, who had gone on to become one of Arizona's first U.S. Senators.

When the Mexican revolution erupted, Slaughter's armed vaquero corps was a source of protection for a wide stretch of the border. They preceded the Federal troopers finally sent to this area by President Woodrow Wilson to protect the American boundary. But the vaqueros could cross the border, as the troopers couldn't since their employer's property lay on both sides. My soldier-brother, D. N. Baird, told me that they could give handy accountings of themselves in skirmishes and shootouts with buccaneers on bronc back.

Meantime America was being drawn as a powerful nation into World War I, raging across the Atlantic. On March 9, 1916, possibly spurred by German agents, Pancho Villa crossed the border to stage his bloody surprise raid on Columbus, New Mexico. All up and down the international boundary other German operatives were distributing literature and organizing anti-American groups among Mexican populations as part of a well-financed effort at disruption. Abroad, German submarines were sinking American ships without regard for the safety of crews and passengers.

War was a grim handwriting on the wall. On April 6, 1917, President Wilson issued a proclamation declaring that "a state of war exists between the United States and the Imperial German Government." Brother D. N. Baird was already in the army. I knew that my place was also in the ranks. Soon I would find myself in uniform.

On May 30, 1917, I last saw John Slaughter. The occasion was a picnic staged by the Phelps-Dodge Copper Company on his ranch. A band was playing, flags were waving from one end of the festive grounds to the other. Orators took the stand to ridicule the German Kaiser and to proclaim the invincibility of American armed forces anywhere in the world. Many a cowpuncher, many a copper miner would leave that gathering to enlist in the army.

For some minutes I strolled away from the crowd, my eyes taking in these adobe buildings, these corrals, these herds of cattle and horses, wishing to retain forever the memory of this establishment and of John and Viola Slaughter with their unfailing hospitality toward us Baird brothers.

I halted by a patch of yucca cactus and lighted a cigarette. I heard a step behind me and quickly whirled around.

There stood John Slaughter, hand outstretched.

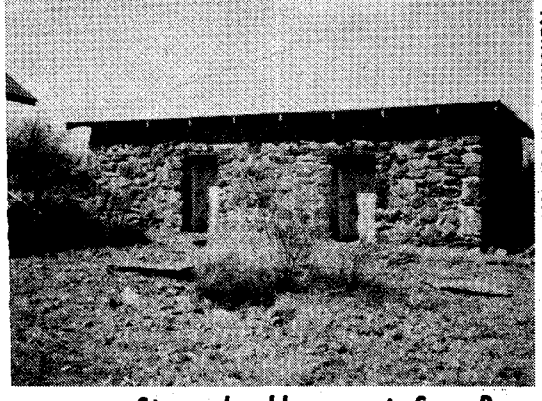
"Mr. Baird," he said gravely. "I want you and your brother to know that you will be as welcome here after this war is over as you were before."

I gulped something in reply. Slaughter strode away. I knew that I would never meet another man like him.

And I never have all these long years since. I do wish that I might have seen him one more time before his death at age 81 on October 15, 1922.

The war was over by then and I was back in Tennessee meaning to study law and then to practice in that changed West of John Slaughter. Perhaps it was more than coincidence that I would find myself back on the border, on a Texas stretch of it transformed by irrigation into one of America's most fertile garden spots.

D. N. Baird, my brother, is dead. We talked much about John Slaughter before he went on.



National Park Service.

Stone bunkhouse at San Bernardino Ranch, 1884.

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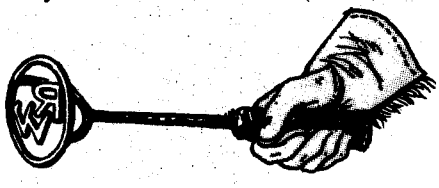

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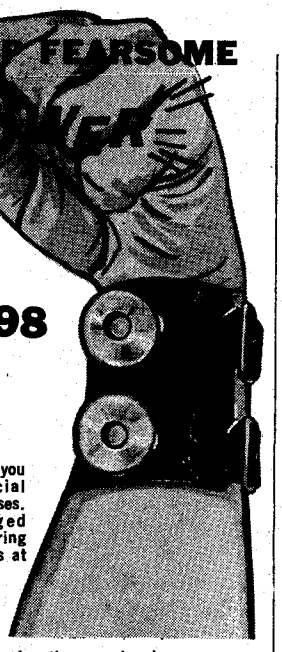

"Power Packed" Arm Builders Start Instantly To Give You mighty striking power and strength. Build the powerful arms you want without special equipment or exercises. Wear these rugged weighted wristlets during your ordinary activities at work or play.

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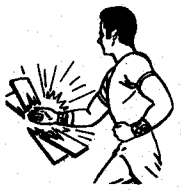
Hour by hour, day by day the muscles in your arms are strengthened and grown to new power. Wear your "Power Packed" wristlets and get the proud masculine feeling that says "I can take care of myself."

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Order your "Power Packed" weighted wristlets today. Use them for 10 days. If you don't see immediate and progressive improvement, if you don't instantly feel more powerful, more masculine, more capable — you can return them for refund of the full purchase price.



Cost of one $3.98 plus 35¢ shipping. A pair costs $6.98 plus 55¢ shipping. Sorry, No C.O.D.

Power Builders Dept. 148-B...
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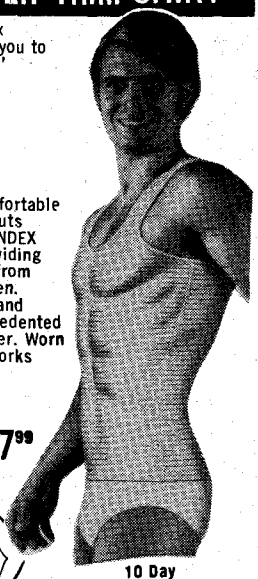
Extra-light, extra-comfortable long line undershirt puts power net LYCRA SPANDEX & NYLON to work providing firm, smooth control from chest to lower abdomen. Smoothes out bulges and trims you with unprecedented built-in slimming-power. Worn as an undershirt, it works to keep you in shape. Completely machine washable. White only.



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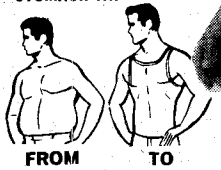

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10 Day MONEY BACK GUARANTEE
Purchase Price Refundable if not 100% Satisfied.

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6311 Yucca St., Hollywood, Calif. 90028

My chest is _____ inches. (Exhale & measure chest.) SIZES: ☐ S (34-36), ☐ Med. (38-40), ☐ Lg. (42-44), ☐ XL (46-48), ☐ 2X (50-52) Add 50c per order postage & handling. Total Enclosed $ _____ Calif. residents add 5% tax. For COD enclose $2.00 deposit.

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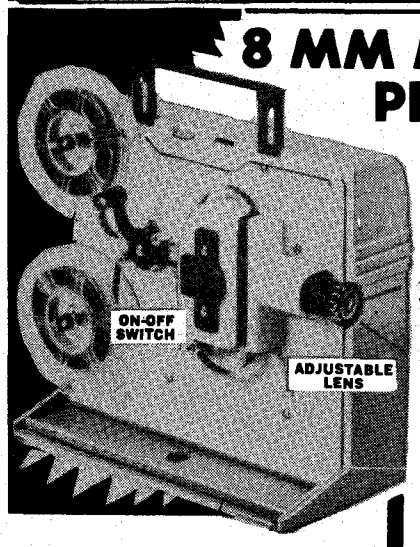

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Makes People Look So Full and Real, You'll Feel You Can Reach Out and Touch Them

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FEATURES

- Sturdy construction for long life
- Speed control for fast or slow motion
- Projects color or black and white
- Complete with screen
- Guaranteed

No Need To Miss Out On the Fun of Private Movies Now at this Low Price

Here is a projector which, though precision-engineered and sturdily built for long use, is so reasonably-priced that everyone can now enjoy the thrills of showing home movies or standard 8 mm commercial movies. And it's so easy to operate that even a child can learn to use it quickly. Its double lens system and smooth operation give amazing performance. And — because it so compact, you can take it with you anywhere and show your home movies to friends or relatives. (It comes in its own carrying case with handle. Closes completely for easy portability.) No need to unwind electric cord and hunt for an outlet either —because it has no cord. The batteries (available anywhere) are completely stored in the base - and they're ready at the flip of a switch. This quick-focusing automatic Projector shows 8mm color or black-and-white film. If you wish to stop it at a particular frame, you can do so. Speed control lets you speed up film or slow down the action for enjoyment of every detail. (Batteries not included).

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☐ I enclose $6.98 (please add 75c shipping charges).
☐ Send COD. I enclose $1 deposit and will pay postman $5.98 balance plus postage and COD handling charges on delivery.

NAME .....
ADDRESS ..... ZIP .....
☐ Send me ..... Stereo Specs @ $2.98 each.
N.Y. State Residents Please Add Sales Tax.

PONY EXPRESS
(continued from page 50)

trail ran through Placerville which in 1849 was known as Old Dry Diggings. After the townspeople had hanged several outlaws without benefit of trial, they renamed the place Hangtown. In 1850 the name was changed again to Placerville. On Main Street today are a number of old buildings that date from 1860, including the Ivy House, once known as the Placerville Academy, the Methodist Church, and St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

Farther west on U.S. 50 is Old Sacramento. Founded in 1849, this was the western terminus of the transportation systems that linked East and West. In the Historic Section today are to be found the largest collection of buildings dating from the days of the gold rush, the stage coach, and the Pony Express. There are 44 original buildings — banks, hotels, saloons, stores, restaurants, express office, newspaper office, and telegraph office. In the course of the years some buildings have been altered, but all are basically intact.

As one travels the West today, following old trails, finding the remains of buildings with gun ports looking out across the silence and loneliness of desert places, the significance of the achievement accomplished by the dedicated men and the wild young riders of the Pony Express assumes reality. One finds it is not hard to retrace the years across the span of time and perhaps hear, above the whispering sands and rustle of wind in the sagebrush, the challenge in the fluttering beat of a pony's hoofs.

REFERENCE SOURCES:

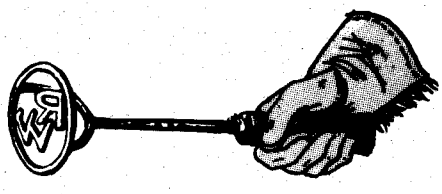
Saint Joseph Museum & Pony Express Museum
Saint Joseph, Missouri

Bureau of Land Management
Utah State Office,
Salt Lake City, Utah

Our Public Lands, Publication for Fall, 1965

Stage Coach West, Frank Moody
Thomas Y. Crowell Co.
New York, N.Y.

U.S. Mail — A. E. Summerfield
The Post Office Dept. — Cullinan.



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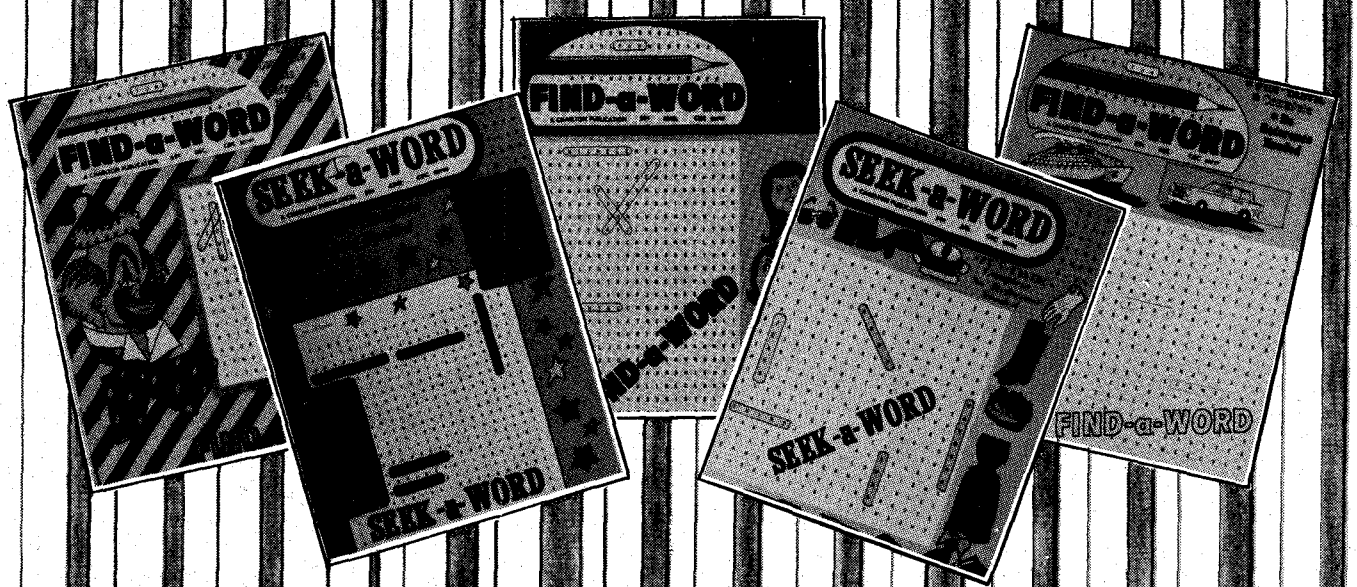

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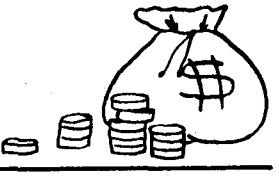

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simple		a	s	y	
steal		o	b		

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REAL WEST BACK COPIES

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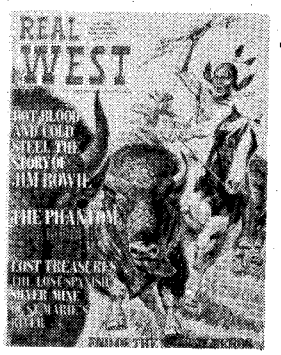
Pierre Laverdure--Metis Wanderer of the Far West

Ernie Cashel--Born to be Hanged

The Quest for Quantrill's Bones

Oklahoma Train Robbery



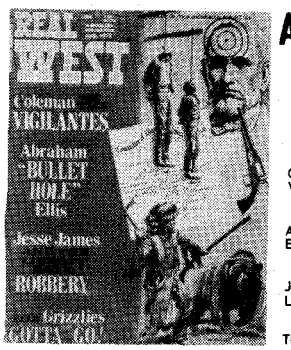
JUNE 1972

Hot Blood and Cold Steel, The Story of Jim Bowie

The Phantom Mail Robbery

Lost Treasures--The Lost Spanish Silver Mine of St. Marie's River

End of the Shaggy Herds



AUG 1972

Coleman of the Vigilantes

Abraham "Bullet-hole" Ellis

Jesse James and the Liberty Bank Robbery

The Grizzlies Gotta Go

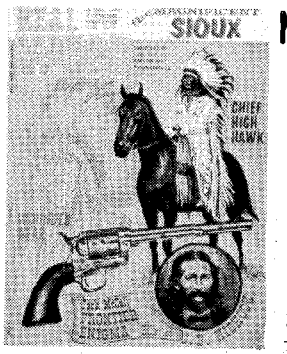
SEPT 1972

Tom Horn--Lawman & Outlaw

Red Power--The Ponca Trail of Tears

Standing Bear

Zane Grey--Man of the West



NOV 1972

Chief High Hawk Wounded Bear

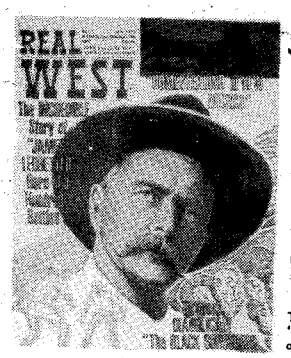
Jack McCall--Frontier enigma--Killer of J.B. Hickock

DEC 1972

Colonel Jack Hayes of The Texas Rangers

Firehouse Lillie of San Francisco

UTE Raid at Little Navajo



JAN 1973

Homesteading in New Mexico

Ruthless, Diabolical, "The Black Sorceress of San Francisco

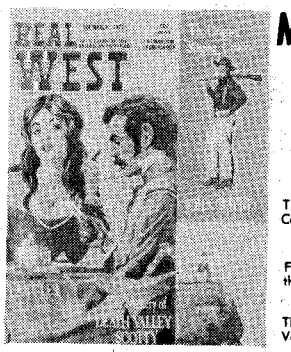
The Incredible story of "James Ledbetter Hero of a Hundred Battles"

FEB 1973

The betrayal and Murder of Crazy Horse

Bullet Swapout in Oklahoma

The Death of Dallas Stoudenmire

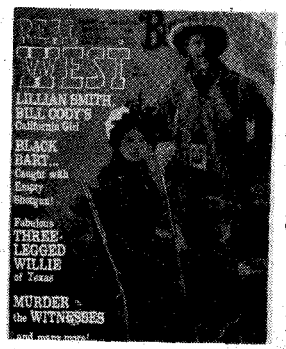


MARCH 1973

The Original Singing Cowboy--John Wayne

Famous Lighthouses of the Old West

The Mystery of Death Valley

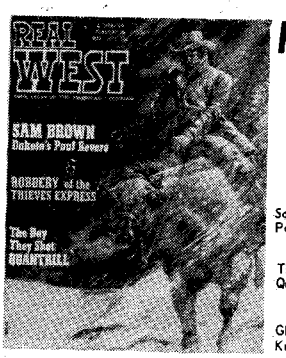


APRIL 1973

Lillian Smith-Biff Cody's California Girl

Black Bart Caught With Empty Shotgun

Three Legged Willie of Texas

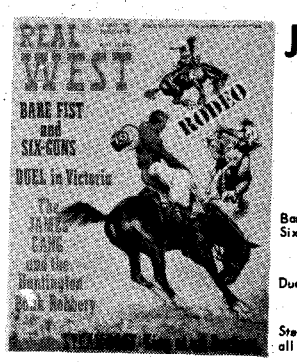


MAY 1973

Sam Brown-Dakota's Paul Revere

The Day They Shot Quantrill

Ghost Towns I Have Known



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